THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 44

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APRIL 1995

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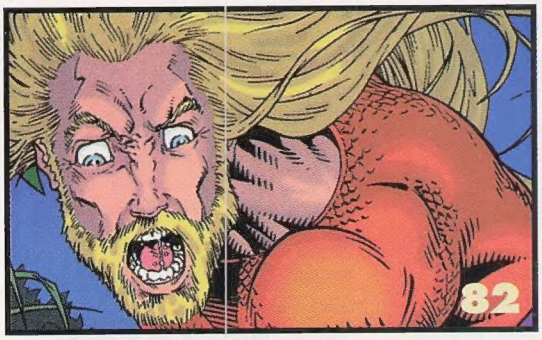

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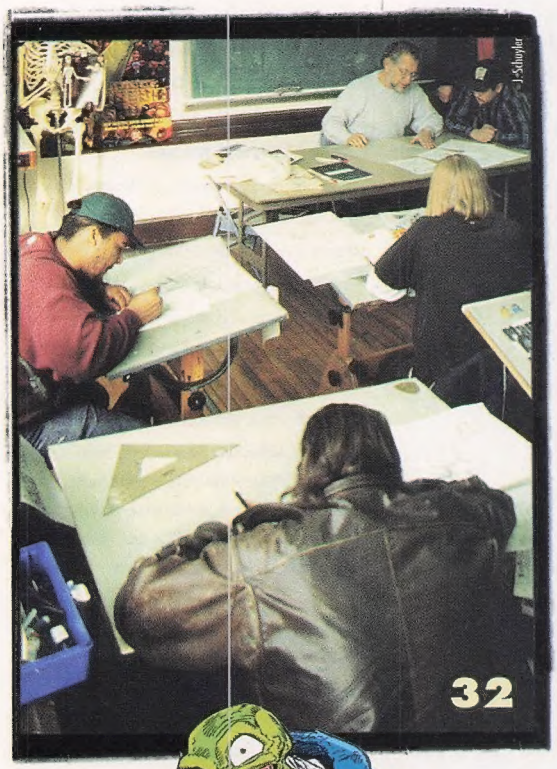

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WIN!

A CHANCE TO BE THE MASK!

Check out page 43 to see what it takes!! ™ & © Dark Horse Comics

editorial

THIS JOINT IS JUMPIN'

Things just don't sit still here very long. We're constantly changing things in *Wizard* to stay on the edge of the ever-changing comic book marketplace. Columns, departments, heck, even the tone of the mag gets tweaked here and there on a seemingly monthly basis. And our staff is no exception. Take our new Managing Editor Joe Yanarella. Joe comes on board with 10 years of editorial experience under his belt, and he's already working the young, punk *Wizard* staff into a fine-tuned machine. Y'see, while the *Wizard* crew is creative and fast-working, we're all mostly a bunch o' snot-nosed kids. And though we didn't realize it till he showed up, we needed somebody who has Joe's experience to help us streamline our crew and the mag. And all the while, his background shines through creatively, which you'll definitely notice in the coming months. So a hearty welcome to "Super Joe."

Aside from Joe coming aboard, we have a couple of other exciting going-ons here at *Wiz* HQ First off, we've finally had all the fan surveys from *Wizard* #41 tallied, and the results were mighty interesting—especially your guesses as to what's inside those Stretch Armstrong guys; funny stuff (unprintable, but funny). You'll begin seeing some changes as a result of that survey right with this very issue. For example, this month kicks off our new manga column by Lea Hernandez, which focuses on the increasingly popular Japanese comics. We've been hearing requests for over a year that you wanted a manga column, but the past few months have seen a tidal wave of demand. So, *boom*, we deliver. Check it out on page 46.

On top of that, we've also cooked up some great feature articles as well, some of which couldn't have been possible without the help of our industry pals. My thanks to Valiant's Big Kahuna Steve Massarsky for letting us drag in our crew and camera herd to get the skinny on the big Birthquake brouhaha. Though I'll reserve judgment until I see what kind of books the "new" Valiant puts out for the first few months, I must admit that what they've got planned—combined with the creative teams behind the titles—has made me more interested in the Valiant books than I've been since that Shooter fella was hangin' over there. My thanks also to industry veteran Joe Kubert, for taking the time out of his hectic schedule to show us around his digs as we disrupted the school day and profiled the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg for this issue, as we also get the lowdown on WildStorm's new ongoing *Gen*^{13} series, get knee-deep in mystery with Topps's *X-Files*, find out what else can go wrong in Aquaman's life, and have a good long sit-down with writer Chuck Dixon, who's finally cutting back on his huge workload. Good stuff.

And before I split, I want you to do something. After you're done with this ish, seeing the changes we've made and reading the features we've run, I want you to drop us a line (to the Magic Words address on page 14), and tell us what you did and didn't like about this issue, or how you agree/disagree with a topic raised, or with a topic you feel needs to be addressed. The surveys that we run do help us, but they don't have the same punch as a letter straight from you giving us your specific points of view. So c'mon, get off your duffs and be a part of the best li'l comic mag around.

Adiós,

Pat McCallum
Editor-in-Chief

mastHead

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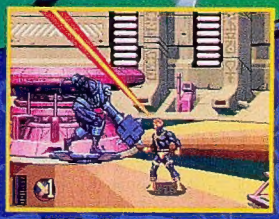

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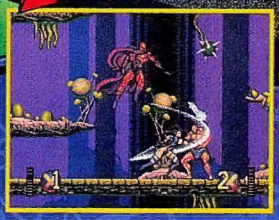

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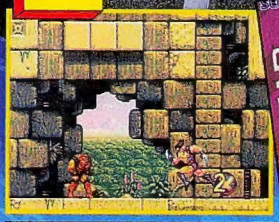

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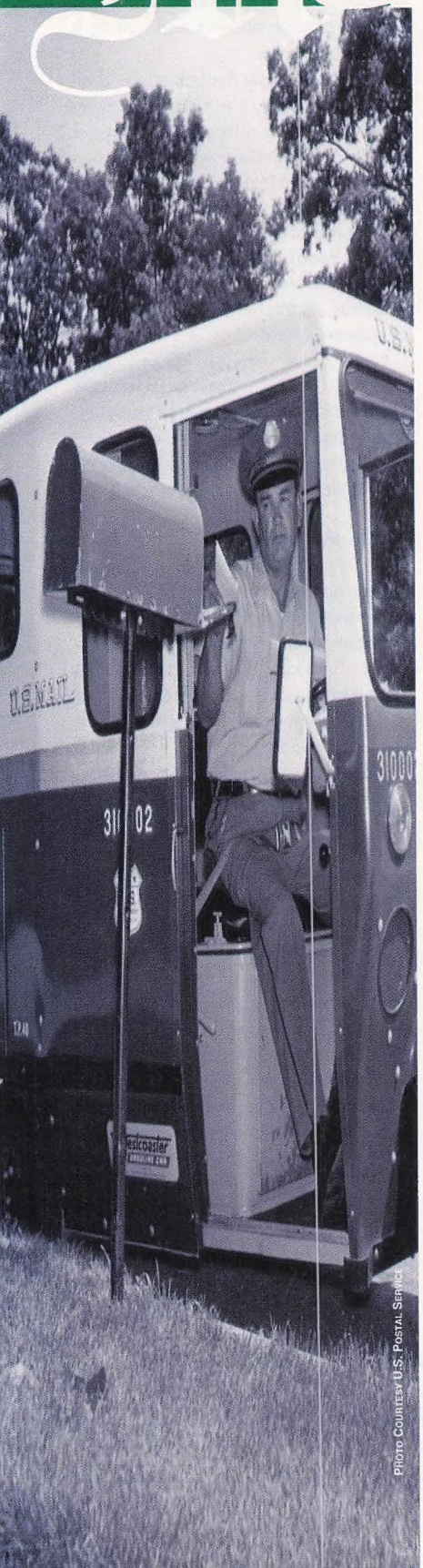
Magic Words



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Cut it Out!

A few months ago (in issue #38, to be exact) we ran a cutesy little letter from a kid that was addressed to Spider-Man. The letter writer, our pal Sammy, told Spidey that he was a big fan and requested an autographed photo of Spider-Man. We gave Stan "The Man" Lee a call and arranged for Stan to send an autographed photo of himself to Sammy, in place of ol' Web-Head's John Hancock (Hey, Spidey's been a pretty busy guy lately!). Sounds cool, right?

Well, it was, until we started getting all the follow-up letters. All of a sudden, everyone was crawling out of the woodwork with crudely fashioned letters pretending they were six years old and trying to get autographed photos and other goodies out of everyone from Frank Miller to the Dalai Lama. Well, you ain't foolin' anyone. So cut it out. And shame on you for trying to take advantage of Stan's big heart. (For those letters that were legit, I apologize—it was a one-time-only deal. Sorry.)

We also get about 50 letters a month asking us, "How do they cram in all that graham?" Geez, I wish I knew. This sounds like it might be the $64,000 Question, but I still haven't been able to figure that one out. If I ever do find out, rest assured I will tell all, right here in this nice public forum for everyone to see. And if any of you know how it is that they actually do cram in all that graham, please feel free to write in and let me know.

One last note: Letter Art has been especially cool the past few months. Keep up the good work! Join us next month in this space for True Tales of the Guy Who Opens All the Letters.

And now, as promised, the letter from Lisa Craig that she overnighted to us. Then we'll launch right back into the great Spider-Man debates:

Dear Wizard,

My boyfriend is an avid reader of Marvel and Image Comics, so I am constantly exposed to them and given the opportunity to read them.

I have one complaint. I'm sick and tired of seeing grotesquely overexaggerated, overdeveloped breasts with perky nipples on women with waists smaller than the average woman's wrist, and thong bikinis wedged so far up their rear ends that their cheeks would be clapping so loudly together it would sound like a standing ovation at a Whitney Houston concert.

Why can't women be drawn the way "real" women are? You don't have to be 5-foot-9 with 38DD breasts, a 15-inch waist, and 34-inch hips to be beautiful, smart, or powerful.

Maybe it's time to start drawing women realistically and stop degrading and offending them. I think you would be surprised at the amount of women who would start buying more comics and appreciate them for how wonderfully they are written, instead of thinking of them as porn, because of the way they portray women.

Lisa Craig
Los Angeles, CA

Comics are not a very realistic medium, and are usually not drawn realistically. The male characters in comics rarely come out looking like real men themselves. Comics, by their very nature, demand idealized characters. Most guys don't have biceps that bulge like Captain America's. The inequity lies in the fact that, by and large, the comic world has men drawing idealized men...and men also drawing idealized women. Thus, we get a bit of a skewed view.

Y'know, the only thing that really gets me is the costumes. Wouldn't you think that if Psylocke is gonna tango with the Juggernaut, she'd want

a little something more for protection than that swimsuit she's always wearin'?

Dear Wizard,

As I read *Wizard* #40, I came across the debate on whether or not Spider-Man should have killed Carnage. I was astonished!

Frankly, I did not understand the problem. Heroes take lives only when necessary! I was raised on comics and the heroes therein. Spider-Man's abilities allow him to do almost anything, but he elects to use good judgment when confronting murderous criminals.

Why? Great power *demands* great responsibility. This is not just a cliché—it's a principle which separates the "wannabes" from the heroes. Deciding to control the situation and not permitting the situation to control you is what makes Spider-Man a hero.

Dark heroes have their place too, as a contrast to regular heroes. Young people must learn the distinction between the two. So, to issue #40 letter writers Larry Schultz, Ben Ziegler, and Philip Morgan, and #36's Dan Elston: Don't wonder why Spider-Man did not kill Carnage, instead wonder what it is about your environment that causes you to want to see a hero become a killer. Then use some of your own power to change it.

Kevin Johnson
Otterville, MO

We've gotten a lot of mail on this subject, but this letter probably summed up one side of the argument better than any I've seen so far.

Dear Wizard,

We thought Professor Warren cloned both Peter Parker and Gwen Stacey, thus producing the now-famous "Spider-Clone." But Gwen's clone turned out to be some brainwashed amnesiac bimbo with a surgically altered face (surgically altered hair too, for that matter) who was miraculously changed to perfectly resemble Gwen. Does it not follow then, that the Spider-Clone could be in reality some brainwashed amnesiac himbo with a surgically altered face (I can't really speak for the hair)? Yeah, there're those arachnid abilities, but those could be attributed to some chemical or scientific enhancement.

Could this be Marvel's "back door"? Are they going to use this to explain away the whole Spider-Clone thing? Have they been fooling us all along?

And, if not, consider this possibility: If the Spider-Clone is really a clone, then maybe the Gwen-Clone is *really* a clone, too. So what we'd have then is a clone who was brainwashed to think she was brainwashed that she wasn't a clone at all, but a surgically altered bimbo, even though she's really a clone. Gerry Conway, where are you now that we need you most?

Bruce Swan
Salem, OR

Gerry Conway is writing the CBS TV series *Diagnosis: Murder* right now, but boy, do I wish he was making sense out of Spidey, too.

Now that's one interesting notion you've got going there, Bruce. Marvel was tight-lipped as usual where major character developments are concerned, so I guess we'll all just have to wait and see.

Dear Jim McLauchlin,

This letter is in reference to your theoretical battle between Lobo and Wolverine in the "When Titans Tussle" article in *Wizard* #39. You said that anyone who didn't believe Lobo could whip Wolverine was a boob. I must admit that I'm a boob. Mr. McLauchlin, you pointed out Lobo's physical advantages, but left out Wolverine's obvious popularity advantage. Wolverine's greatest superpower is the ability to make people buy any book that he appears in.

Lobo's sales are mediocre at best compared to Wolverine's. So, I would suggest that the proverbial "trump card" that Wolverine would hold in this colossal battle, which you overlooked, is the power of the purse strings. And the one power that reigns above all others is the power of the mighty buck.

Sure, I agree: Looking at it pragmatically, Lobo would be the smart bet if the battle went unpublished, but to publish it and kill Wolverine would be inconceivable. That would be like taking a profitable oil field and turning it into a parking lot.

If this were truly the battle to end all battles, where only one man walks away and no one gets reincarnated, believe you me, Wolverine's power to turn everything he stars in into gold would be more than enough to win the battle for him. Wolvie may be a 1,000-to-1 shot to the boys in Vegas, but to the guys and gals in New York who would be creating this fiscal fray, it's Wolverine as the winner by at least six figures.

Tony Stefanelli
Burbank, CA

Now there's an angle I never even thought of. But methinks Tony makes a good point. However, the battles were all looked at pragmatically, so Wolvie still loses out. Live with it.

Dear Wizard,

Isn't it incredible how things change?

I've got this poster from DC's 1986 mini-series *Legends*. This mini-series starred practically every big name in the DC Universe—basically all their "legends." I looked at the poster the other day and realized how much DC has screwed with all these legends.

Superman was killed and brought back.

Batman had his back broken, and the mantle of the Bat was handed over to a psychopath.

The Flash was given a new costume a year or two back, and now they're probably going to bump him off.

Guy Gardner, once a pretty good character, was given Sinestro's yellow ring, then had it taken away, and now he's some funky alien guy (I still haven't quite figured that one out yet).

Changeling is now a big green monster.

Firestorm was changed into an elemental (or something) and then he flew into the sun. And now he's supposed to be coming back.

Dr. Fate is now just plain "Fate," a raving mad psychopath with a sword (And what's with this trend of psychopaths? They're such one-dimensional characters.).

Robin (Jason Todd) was killed by the

Pen Pals

Want to get in touch with your fellow comic fans? Or want them to touch you? Send your name, address, age, gender, and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o Wizard Press, at Magic Words's address on page 16. Hey, make a friend!

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Joker and the Batman readers. A truly pointless move, but I guess I do like the new Robin more.

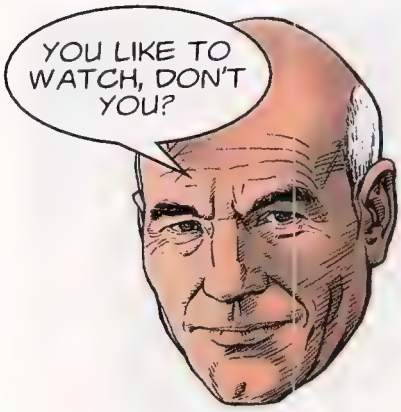
Captain Marvel, the Martian Manhunter, and Elongated Man haven't been mucked with yet, but I'm sure they'll have their day soon.

Not that all this change is bad; it's actually made for a number of good stories. But change for change's sake is a pretty lame device and it's gotten old pretty quick. My point is that I don't think DC really needs to change its characters to make interesting stories. They've already proven that they're capable of doing better than that. I hope this "radical change" trend is now over. I think DC, or any company for that matter, can attract more readers to a title if the title is really truly good than they can with a "big change of the month." Word of mouth is the best advertising to get readers, even better than the mighty Time-Warner Marketing Machine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Marlan Harris
Nuevo, CA

Hmmm. That's interesting. My impression is that most comic readers like the big, sweeping changes that many titles have seen recently. But there's also a little something inside me (probably my pancreas) that says maybe things have gone too far. So, what are the opinions out there? Do we need more big revolutions in comics, or have you seen enough already? Let us know.



Dear Wizard,

While reading the first kick-ass issue of *Team 7*, I came across some interesting artwork. The most interesting piece was on page 14.

Team 7's story takes place during the 1970s, right? So, what's a picture of Jean-Luc Picard doing on the wall of someone's apartment? And more importantly, I'd like to know if this boo-boo will have any effect on the value of the comic.

Regardless, *Team 7* is a definite winner. Thumbs up to Image and Chuck Dixon. Image has score another knockout.

Glenn Newell
Brownsville, PA

That, my funky friend, is called an anachronism. An "anachronism" happens when someone, usually a writer, places something in a time period in which it does not belong. If you're watching a gladiator movie and Spartacus is wearing Converse All-Stars™ and a Timex™, that's an anachronism. This one in *Team 7* is probably intentional. While I have yet to read *Team 7*, I will still give a hearty thumbs up to Chuck Dixon. The reason I do this is because I fear that if I don't, his buddy—and fellow comic writer—Beau Smith will come to my house and beat the crap out of me. And if you ever ask a question so silly as "Will this have any effect on the value of the comic?" again, I'll personally come to *your* house and beat the crap out of you.

Dear Smartest People on Earth,

Some guy sold my friend an *X-Men* #1 (vol. 2), cover 1B for $2.50. But it

CAPTAIN PICARD ™ & © PARAMOUNT PICTURES

has no staples. Instead it's just sorta glued together. Is this a new binding technique, or is this a piece of crap? There are no staple holes, either.

Julie Hamada
Moorpark, CA

What you have is a piece of crap. Either that, or an X-Men "Monument Set."

And is it just me, or is there something wrong with a society that has to refer to a comic as an *X-Men* #1 (vol. 2), cover 1B?

Dear Magic Words,

How do Cyclops's glasses work if they're red? Red glass should absorb all colors of light except red. That would make it so that his red eye beams would go through the glasses. I believe this mistake is a mix of rushed character development and bad science. If this is true, please tell Marvel to suddenly change it to some other color, like Image did when they changed Bedrock's name to Badrock. Also tell them not to advertise it in advance so that it becomes a hot commodity.

Amit Punjabi
Austin, TX

Wrong-o, buckaroo! The onus of bad science falls on your shoulders. An object that is red does absorb all colors of light except red. But, the red is reflected back to your eyes, which is why you see the object as red. Similarly, Cyclops's ruby quartz glasses will absorb all colors of light except red, which should be reflected back at him. So, chances are, he's constantly zonking himself with his own eyebeams. And, chances are, it doesn't bother him. Since he and his brother Havok are immune to each other's power, it stands to reason that Cyclops is also immune to his own eyebeams.

Dear Wizard,

I think that some of the people that read comics are too critical of them. For example, I have read a lot of the letters that you print in your magazine and a lot of the people are complaining about too much violence or other related subjects.

I feel that the people who make up a comic book should be able to do their material to the best of their ability, and that they should enjoy doing what they are doing. If readers don't like the material that a particular artist or writer is doing, then they just shouldn't buy it. It's that simple. Like Forrest Gump would say, "If you don't have anything good to say, then don't say anything at all."

Aaron Hilke
Barron, WI

It's simple advice, and good advice. If you don't like *Punch-Man*, don't read *Punch-Man*. End of problem.

But, geez, if we suddenly turn into a nation of Forrest Gump-quoters, I'm moving somewhere sane.

Dear Magic Words,

I have a simple question about an age-old debate. In your opinion, what are the toughest, most indestructible comic book materials ever? I immediately think of the following weapons: Thor's hammer, the Silver Surfer's board, Captain America's shield, and Wolverine's (former) adamantium claws. Or just plain ol' adamantium for that matter.

So, what do you think?

Kent "Wished He Lived in Another Era" Davis
Harrodsburg, KY

Well, Thor's hammer, the sacred Mjolnir, is tougher than the average Craftsman™, but hardly indestructible. It cracked in a recent battle with the Destroyer in *Thor* #476. The Surfer's board and Cap's shield were taken apart at the molecular level by the appropriately named Molecule Man in *Avengers* #215, but otherwise they've proven to be rather sturdy. Adamantium is tougher than nails, but has been shown to be dented on a few occasions; one of those occasions, ironically, was by Thor's hammer.

I'd have to say that the toughest materials in the comic world are, in no particular order, Dr. Doom's megalomania, Green Arrow's chili, Jim Shooter's haircut, and Todd McFarlane's ego.

Dear Wizard,

I was wondering if you can find me some dirt on why DC and Marvel haven't merged by now? Oh, yeah—and send me one of everything, too.

Andrew Schmidt
Madison, WI

The main reason they have not merged is that they are competitors, and in the business world competitors rarely merge (a rare exception to this rule was the merging of RCA™ and General Electric™ in the mid-'80s). If they were to merge, we would have an oligopoly in the comic world. An "oligopoly" is the situation that exists when a very small number of companies have control over a very large portion of a particular market. For instance, the domestic auto market with General Motors™, Ford™, and Chrysler™ as the only players, represents an oligopoly. (Geez. First "anachronism" and now "oligopoly." This must be vocabulary month here at Magic Words.)

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

Why in all the variety of places that Clark Kent could choose to change into Superman, he has to pick a phone booth? I mean, what's this guy going to do—call Krypton? Collect? "Hello, I would like to reach out and touch someone." Yeah, from three-trillion miles away! A K-Mart™ changing room or a closet would be better. Why does he have to pick a phone booth?

Nolan Cain
Lakeport, MI

Heck, I don't know. Tradition, I guess. He used to use phone booths all the time back in the old days, but it seems like he hardly uses them anymore. I guess it beats using the Porta Potty.

Dear Wizard,

I'm a big NBA fan and a big DC comic fan and I was wondering: If Den-

Robert Llerena Jr. Age: 19 Sex: Male 2327 1st Ave., Apt. 2A New York, NY 10035 Likes: *Spawn, Savage Dragon, Cyberforce*	Brian Hamm Age: 18 Sex: Male 440 Virginia Avenue Madison, IN 47250 Likes: *Elfquest*, All X-titles, *WildC.A.T.s*	Gene Lintner Age: 10 Sex: Male 7564 5th St. Atwood, CO 80722 Likes: *Spawn, Predator, X-O Manowar*	Kelly Alatcon Age: 15 Sex: Female Rt. 3, Box 460 Waco, TX 76708 Likes: *Venom, Ren & Stimpy, StormWatch*	Brianna Brock Age: 14 Sex: Female 22671 Colony Ct. Novi, MI 48374 Likes: Dark Horse titles, Image titles, *X-Men 2099*	Leonard Baricordi Age: 23 Sex: Male Via L. della Robbia, 33 50019 Sesto Fiorentino Florence, Italy Likes: *Spawn, Uncanny X-Men*, any Jim Lee title	Chuck Causby Age: 21 Sex: Male 3000 Esa Hildebran Rd. Valdese, NC 28690 Likes: *Savage Dragon, Pitt, Supreme*	Jeremy Carr Age: 13 Sex: Male 11041 Beach Blvd. Jacksonville, FL 32246 Likes: *Superman*, X-titles, *What If?*

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THE SHADOW MAGE #3

VALIANT

BIRTH-QUAKE!

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Ask the WIZARD

Q: "Who Washes the Washmen's Infinite Secrets of Legendary Crossover Knight Wars?", an '80s-inspired tale in *Radioactive Man* #5, was inspired by exactly what?

—B. Todd, Federal Way, WA

A: A number of "classic" tales, including DC's *The Dark Knight Returns*, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, and *Watchmen*, as well as Marvel's *Secret Wars*.

Q: Why doesn't Gambit's gloves charge up when he charges other things up?

—J. Bowman, McAndrews, KY

A: If you look closely, you'll see that Gambit's gloves are actually cut by his thumb and index finger, so only his flesh touches whatever he charges up. Of course, another possible answer is that his gloves are made of living tissue, which of course, he can't charge up at all. Yecch!

Q: How the heck does Legion's hair stay up like that?

—G. Hyatt, Decatur, MI

A: Krazy Glue™.

Q: What does Cajun mean?

—E. Herman, Alex, VA

A: Well, mon petit, I could be a stickler and tell you to look it up yourself, but I'll be a nice guy and tell ya that it's a native of Louisiana originally descended from Acadian French immigrants. It's also their dialect. (They sure talk funny, no?)

Ask the Pros

Hey, Marv Wolfman...
When is the Nightwing mini-series coming out?

—E. Rasiel, Syracuse, NY

PHOTOS: AL ORTEGA

Have a question that's bugging the heck out of you and that no one can answer? Heck, the Wizard can answer anything. Just send your stumpers to Ask the Wizard (or Ask the Pros for some real professional help), c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064.

nis Rodman was in the Legion of Super-Heroes, what would his power be? What would his name be?

Nibor Somar
Blauvelt, NY

Well, his hair alone could be Chameleon Boy. His only real powers are the abilities to get rebounds and to torque everybody off, so I guess we could call him Obnoxious Rebounding Lad. But he'd have to enter the Legion with his sometime girlfriend Madonna, who would of course be Material Girl.

Yo, Wizard,

Could you answer some questions?

1) Who are Milk & Cheese?

2) What the heck are they doing in the comic book industry?

3) How many Secret Defenders were there?

4) Why do you like Lobo so much?

Thanks!

Samuel A. Jackson
Bartlett, TN

Sure I can.

1) They are dairy products gone bad. They are 32 ounces of pasteurized processed hate. They are the stars of their very own comic strip written and drawn by Evan Dorkin and published by Slave Labor Graphics.

2) They are beating up everyone who disagrees with them, watching TV, drinking gin, and berating the French.

3) A more appropriate question would be: "Who cares how many Secret Defenders there were?"

4) Actually, I don't.

You're welcome.

Hello up there, Wizard folks,

I have a couple of questions for you guys. I have no idea what the answers are and if you guys could help me out here, I would greatly appreciate it.

1) Since a Green Lantern ring has practically unlimited power, yet is powerless against the color yellow, does that mean a Green Lantern is invulnerable against everything except the color yellow? And if so, does that mean that if I clubbed him on the head with a banana, he would be injured? And if that banana part is true, what would happen if he drank too much lemonade?

2) Could you tell me where Charles M. Schulz, creator of "Peanuts," lives?

3) Is it just me, or is it strange that even though DC has had two time-space continuity-cleaning storylines (in *Crisis on Infinite Earths* and *Zero Hour*), Marvel's time-space continuity seems better?

4) Speaking of Marvel comics, if characters who went into the past to prevent their own future from happening actually succeed and prevent what happened from happening, does that mean they'll disappear from the face of the Earth?

Michael Li
Bonita, CA

1) If your banana struck him with enough force, yes, you could injure him. In light of this startling revelation, they are now installing banana detectors at the entrances to the Green Lantern Academy and Training School. If a Green Lantern drank too much lemonade, he'd just have to pee like a racehorse. The same, however, would apply if it was pink lemonade. (As a sidenote, the new GL's ring is now immune to the color yellow. So, now he can eat all the bananas he wants.)

2) Charles Schulz currently makes his home in northern California. He is a native of Saint Paul, Minn., and remains such a hockey fan from his days Up North that he built his own ice arena on his property and still keeps active by playing in a seniors hockey league.

3) I think they both still suck. DC's two "time-cleaning" stories really didn't clean anything up at all. It's a safe bet that Marvel will have to do its own time cleaning story soon. Let's hope the folks over at Marvel do a better job.

4) I don't know. I really don't want to know, either. These time paradoxes give me an ice cream headache just thinking about 'em.

Dear Magic Words,

Go, WildC.A.T.s! There, that's off my chest. Now a few questions:

1) What order does the making of a comic book go in?

2) There are only a certain amount of issues of *Wizard*. Where do all the *Wizard* cards come from?

3) In a lot of recent issues of *Wizard*, the address for the envelope art is in Monsey, NY. But you tell us to send our letter to 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920. Which one is right?

4) What are Jim Lee's glasses for?

5) Where's the beef?

André Nguyen
Ventura, CA

1) First you have a mommy comic and a daddy

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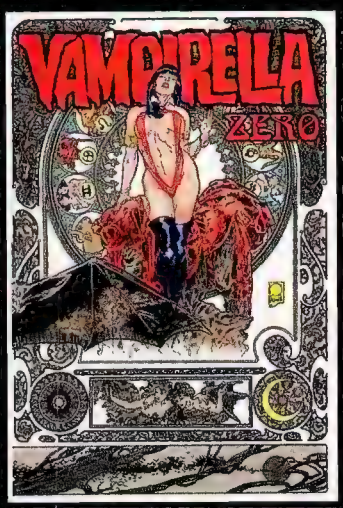

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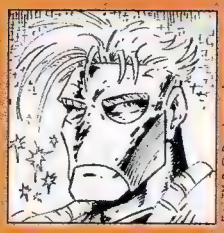


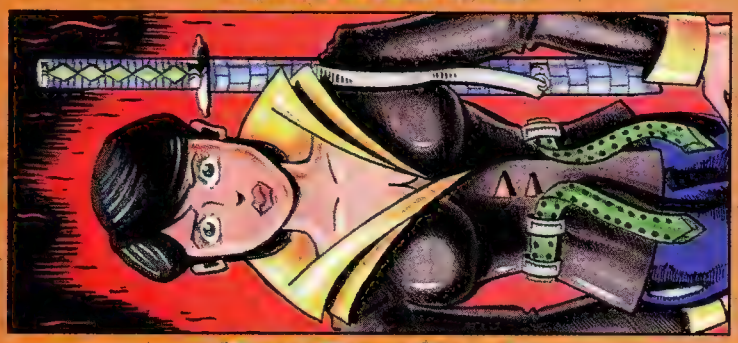
Exit ™ & © Rob Liefeld Inc.

When you drop us a line, show us your drawin' skill! If it's good, we'll print it here, and *boom*, you'll be famous! Just think, as soon as your envelope gets printed, you'll become a household name and you'll start dating the likes of Kathy Ireland and Gabriel Byrne (or both, if you like). Fans who get their letter art printed will each receive a *Prophet* #5 signed by Stephen Platt, an *Incredible Hulk* #418 signed by Peter David, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a stylin' *Wizard* T-shirt! The creator of the best envelope wins all that neat stuff, *plus* an original framed Todd Nauck sketch of the teleportin' Newman, Exit. Thanks for the happenin' art, Todd! Artists: please include a clearly printed return address on the **back** of your envelope.

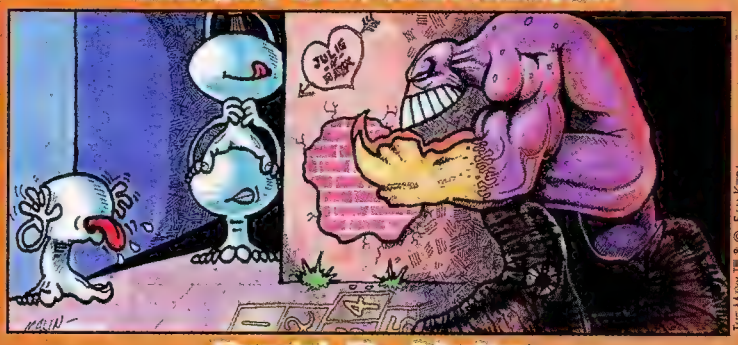
Lauri Dangereau
Wappingers Falls, NY

Lobo ™ & © DC Comics

Brian Fisher
South Portland, ME



Ong Ewe Keat
Selangor, D.E., West Malaysia



The Maxx ™ & © Sam Kieth

David B. Malin
Lebanon, PA

comic that love each other very much. Then they get married. Then after a bout or two of "special hugging," the mommy comic becomes impregnated. Nine months later—BOOM—a new comic book has been made.

2) First you have a mommy *Wizard* card and a daddy *Wizard* card that love each other very much. Then they get married. Then after a bout or two of "special hugging," the mommy *Wizard* card becomes impregnated. Nine months later—BOOM—that's where *Wizard* cards come from.

3) Check out the envelope art section to the left for the proper address.

4) All the better to see you with, my dear.

5) Cows.

Dear Wizard,

Please answer:

1) What's the comic with that guy who kills people?

2) What's 32.5 times 66.523, divided by 396.2, plus 9?

3) Is *The Tick* a comic or just a cartoon?

4) And finally, please send me $2.00 for shipping and handling.

Michael Chan
Cupertino, CA

OK.

1) Uh, could you be a bit more specific?

2) 14.457

3) Both. Although it comes out on a rather irregular schedule, a total of 12 regular issues of *The Tick* have been published by New England Comics. If you think the cartoon is a hoot (and you should), give the comic a try.

4) Up yours.

Y'know, that little run was kind of fun. I'm thinking about doing an all Q-and-A Magic Words some time. What do you think, would that be cool? Let me know. In the meantime, you can read the rest of the magazine. Enjoy. I'm going to go hibernate for a month or so now. See ya,

Jim McLauchlin, who spends most of his time over at Collector's Sportslook, *refuses to wear any tennie-runners not manufactured by Converse™. It's a heel support thing.*

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Compiled by Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Marvel's Heroes World Purchase Leads to Industry Questions

Will Marvel Entertainment Group's January acquisition of a distribution company—Heroes World—change the way that comics are distributed?

The acquisition led to speculation throughout the industry as to Marvel's distribution plans, but **Ivan Snyder**, Heroes World president, told *Wizard* that there are no immediate plans to change the distributor's relationship with other publishers. "We plan to continue operations on an ongoing basis," he said. "We plan to expand operations, becoming a national and international distributor, and are currently working toward that goal."

Asked specifically if those plans include possibly acquiring another regional distributor, Marvel Comics president **Terry Stewart** said, "We are not presently considering purchasing another distributor."

Marvel has long been rumored to be unhappy with the direct-market system and the company's relationship with distributors.

Larry Marder, speaking for **Image Comics**, said, "I think Marvel is saying, 'The direct-sales market is a level playing field that has evolved over the last 15 years and, quite frankly, we think a level playing field is unfair to Marvel.' They'd like everything to slant their way." Most other major publishers refused to comment, except to offer congratulations.

Gary Colabuono, president of **Classics International Entertainment** (parent company of the Moondog's chain of comics shops), told *Wizard* that **DC Comics** made no presentation to the January meeting of the International Association of Direct Distributors, and that DC's director of direct market sales, **Bob Wayne**, told the assembled distributors that DC would have nothing further to say. DC Comics confirmed the report.

Industry insiders believed that Marvel was poised to announce that Marvel books would be exclusively distributed through Heroes World and DC was set to respond with its own exclusive agreement. But no official announcements came at IADD.

Colabuono also reported that Marvel Comics announced it would publish its new trade terms on Jan. 27th (to go into effect May 1), and that those terms would only be good for 30 days. In the past, publishers have normally established trade terms for a four-month period. A change in terms could possibly affect the avail-

HEROES WORLD CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

ROBINSON Departs WildC.A.T.s

Citing overwork and a desire to concentrate on his DC project, *Starman*, writer **James Robinson** has announced that ***WildC.A.T.s* #20** will be his last issue of the WildStorm Productions series published by Image Comics.

"I found that I can really only do one monthly book—at least for the time being—and I made the choice that that book would be *Starman*, which is really my baby at DC," Robinson told *Wizard*. "I'm always trying to preserve a quality to my work and I find that if I do too much I get very harried. The one joy I have in working is being able to do research—that's the perk to the job—and I was finding I didn't have the time to research things as much I would have liked to."

Robinson says *WildC.A.T.s* #20 is a good point to end his involvement: "I've written the first three parts to the WildStorm crossover ["WildStorm Rising"]—the opening bookend, *WildC.A.T.s* #20, and the *Union* issue that's involved. It made sense to work up to that point as my farewell. It's a good end point. I've done six issues and at the end of the crossover, the WildC.A.T.s go off in a new, distinct direction."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

WildC.A.T.s™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions

WildC.A.T.s #20 will be James Robinson's last issue because of his desire to concentrate on DC's Starman.

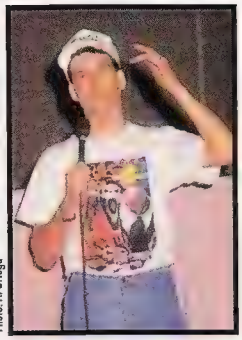


Photo: Al Ortega

Todd McFarlane entertains fans at comic show. "And then I put this finger...Oh, I can't tell this story here."

Highlander 3 *opens to poor reviews. "Me wee willy is a beet drifty," said immortal freak to stunned critics.*

Photo: Al Ortega

William Shatner entertains fans at comic show. "And then Todd put his finger...Oh, I can't tell this story here."

HEROES WORLD CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

ability of Marvel Comics in certain local markets. Calls to Marvel to confirm the report went unanswered.

"The IADD members feel that they are twisting in the wind," Colabuono said. "There's nothing they can do to plan for any long-term strategic direction, because they need to know what Marvel's going to do. They're in worse shape in this scenario than they would be if they knew Marvel was cutting them off tomorrow."

Colabuono believes Marvel's plan is to use Heroes World to sell comics directly to the largest retailers at the same terms that they sell to distributors such as Diamond Distribution and Capital City Distribution. He believes it likely that the other major publishers would then refuse to deal with Heroes World and would also begin dealing directly with the largest retailers. Malibu Comics, which was recently purchased by Marvel, would in all probability follow suit if an exclusive distribution deal was cut at Marvel.

What does this all mean for the fans? The possibility of exclusive deals with distributors and major publishers could potentially squeeze out certain independent or small-press publishers, making it more difficult for fans to get certain books.

™ & © Heroes World Distribution Co.

Jeff Smith, whose Cartoon Books publishes his ***Bone*** series, said, "I think the 30 percent of the market that is independently published is being forgotten about in all the scenarios being discussed. Overall, I think it's too early to panic, because I don't know what the other major publishers have to gain by stiffing Diamond or Capital."

For the moment, both Diamond and Capital City have reaffirmed that they are doing business as usual with all publishers and all retail accounts.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

Will HW's catalog continue to have non-Marvel characters on its cover?

DC Raises Prices, Improves Formats

DC Comics announced an upgrade in paper and color quality, plus an increase in price, for most of its titles, starting with March's books.

Titles in the **Superman** and **Batman** lines will upgrade to the Miraweb Format (heavy, gloss-coated paper), and will cost $1.95, instead of $1.50; DC's standard titles, like ***Flash*** and ***Wonder Woman,*** will hit the $1.75 mark, up from $1.50; Milestone Media books will join ***Star Trek*** and ***Babylon 5*** titles in the glossy Fracote Format, at a $2.50 price; and while Mando Format books like *Starman*, and half of Vertigo's books will jump from $1.95 to $2.25, several Vertigos—including ***Sandman*** and ***Preacher***—will become $2.50.

The price increase was attributed to rising paper costs, in addition to DC's emphasis on quality. "Now that tastes and creative styles are catching up to the potential inherent in offset printing," said **Paul Levitz**, DC's executive vice president and publisher, "we want our flagship titles to take full advantage of the best comics can be."

—Marc Wilkofsky

AVENGELYNE Becomes LIEFELD'S Superbabe

Former **Vampirella** model, **Cathy Christian**, and her fiancé, Image Comics publisher **Tony Lobito**, have announced the creation of a new superheroine for **Rob Liefeld's** Maximum Press: **Avengelyne**!

Christian is best known for dressing up (or perhaps we should say dressing *down*) as the oh-so-scantily-clad Vampirella at Harris Comics's convention booths.

Avengelyne, according to Lobito, is an angel fallen from grace, who must serve her penance on Earth by righting wrongs and combating evil as a sexy superbabe based on Christian herself. While Christian and Lobito admit that Avengelyne will inevitably be compared with other comic book "Bad Girls," they stress that Avengelyne will break the mold.

Avengelyne will be presented to comics fans as a series of mini-series and specials, published by Maximum Press. No creative teams have been announced yet, but the first issue is tentatively scheduled for a May release.

Slobbering fanboy alert: Yes, Cathy *will* be modeling the hot Liefeld-designed Avengelyne outfit at conventions!

—Christopher Griffen

Photo courtesy of Image Comics

Former Vampirella model, Cathy Christian, is now Liefeld's Avengelyne.

Mutant Fights Available with Interactive Cards

Storm dodges a Sentinel as Wolverine slashes at Omega Red. No, it's not this month's *X-Forcefactor-Men*. It's a battle you create on your own telephone.

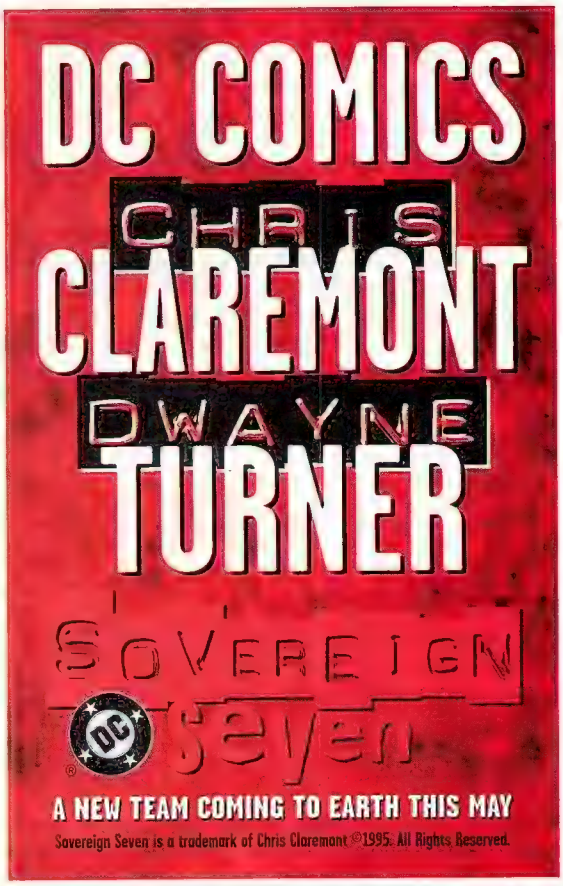
X-Men's Greatest Battles is a new set of interactive **Game-Cards** from **Global Telecommunications Solutions** (GTS) that lets you participate in adventures featuring **Marvel Comics's** mutants. To play, just pick up the phone.

There are five different phone cards that allow users to take on mutant powers in battles including Wolverine vs. Omega Red, Cyclops vs. Mr. Sinister, Gambit vs. Phalanx, Storm vs. Sentinel, and Professor X vs. Magneto. Each four-minute game has five levels of play.

GTS GameCards can be used to either play the game or get 20 minutes of domestic calls. According to GTS vice-president **Cory Eisner**, thousands of the $10 cards have been snatched up by fans and collectors. "These are definitely collectable items not to be thrown away," he said. "We're witnessing the evolution of the trading card."

GTS is the company that produced the Marvel Christmas and Halloween PhoneCards. Eisner said GTS and Marvel may soon produce cards that allow players to win special prizes. Currently, GameCards are available only at KayBee Toy & Hobby Stores.

—Buddy Scalera



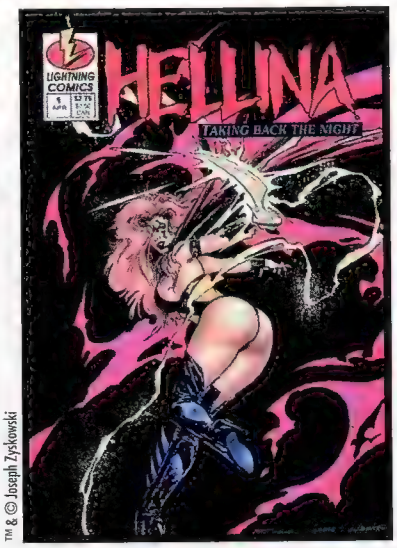
Lightning Comics: Baring Hellina

Lightning Comics is making a daring (and baring) cover enhancement for ***Hellina: Taking Back the Night* #1**, shipping in April. A variant cover will feature Lightning's popular female vigilante with nothing but her boots, whip, and a desire to take on the bad guys.

"I wouldn't say that it connects to the storyline," said **Steven Zyskowski**, vice president of Lightning Comics and writer of *Hellina*. "It's just a unique cover enhancement."

"Right now," he explained, "every kind of cover enhancement that I can think of has been done. I wanted to do something fresh and different, and I had to be very creative. When I looked originally at this cover, it was great. And then it popped in my head, 'Wow, what if she was nude?' It was a spur of the moment idea.

"Traditionally, we've been offering for sale platinum versions of our comics," Zyskowski continued. "We've been told that collectors search everywhere for those platinums. I figured, since the comic industry is dominated by the male consumer, they'd do just about anything to get their hands on a *Hellina* nude variant comic."



TM & © Joseph Zyskowski

Hellina goes buff this April!

Lightning Comics, established two years ago in Michigan, has always been somewhat collector-oriented. **Joseph Zyskowski**, president, founder, and brother to Steven, has promised that no more than 250,000 copies will be produced of any of its first printings. The company's also pledged to never reprint any issue until two years after its original printing date. And Lightning Comics was the first publisher to feature an HIV-positive superhero with Bloodfire.

"The comic will ship in a polybag, with a black bar across her chest and hips, so that it can be displayed without incident," said Steven. "The distributors laughed when we told them about the idea. The general feeling is, 'Why hasn't this been done before?' But none of them said no, and no one said that it was a bad idea."

If the variant cover is successful, Lightning may strike twice. "We do have some ideas about doing it again, if this cover is well received. So our male superheroes [Perg and Bloodfire] might be nude, or we may do another nude Hellina. Whatever the fans would like to see!"

—Ruth Morrison

Archie Restaurants by 1996?

An **Archie** prototype restaurant is probably seven to 10 months away from opening, according to the president of the new Archie Foods Corp. Although no formats or menus have been established, the motif is expected to combine nostalgia and Archie characters in ways that would entertain both kids and adults.

"It will expound upon the 53 years of history of Archie and his imagery," said **Tom Askew**, president of the Irvine, Calif.-based company. "The restaurants will not have a slick, modern, upscale look. It will offer interactive elements for kids while also appealing to adults, many of whom grew up on Archie Comics."

The eatery is expected to offer a varied menu running in the $4 to $6 range. Healthy selections will be stressed, Askew added. The type of service—waitress or counter—is still being discussed. No sites have been selected yet for the first store, but Askew said that the company has received considerable interest from possible franchisees.

Askew, who owns a small chain of nostalgia-oriented restaurants in southern California called Be-Bop Burgers, said he has been working with Mamaroneck, N.Y.-based Archie Comics for two years on the idea.

—Craig Shutt

Archie™ & © Archie Publications

America's favorite teenager is opening a restaurant soon.

Marvel Reduces Editorial Staff

Marvel Comics announced that it would be "refocusing its line by eliminating a number of slower moving, less profitable titles" in order to "channel more editorial, creative, production, sales, and promotional resources into Marvel's best sellers and industry favorites," the company announced in a press release.

"Unfortunately," conceded **Terry Stewart**, president and chief operating officer of Marvel Comics, "reducing slower titles means we'll be reducing some positions in editorial and related departments."

While "specific changes to Marvel's lineup will be announced as they are made," reports of lay-offs include the following:

Craig Anderson—Editor
Richard Ashford—Editor
Don Daley—Editor
Michael Kraiger—Assistant editor to Richard Ashford, now employed freelance for the rock 'n' roll comics end of Marvel
Spencer Lamm—Assistant editor
Freddie Mendez—Assistant editor
Matt Morra—Associate editor
Mindy Newell—Associate editor
Mike Rockwitz—Editor
Evan Skolnick—Associate editor (Skolnick will continue writing *New Warriors*)
Tim Touhy—Assistant editor

According to one of the dismissed staffers, the five editors-in-chief and other department heads were given a head count and the choice of who to let go was left up to them. Work performance was reportedly never mentioned and the layoffs were attributed to downsizing. No offers of lateral movement were made. Those laid off were offered career counseling, which included discussions of networking and a promise of 100 free resumes.

The firings were rumored for months in advance of the actual event.

Insiders reported "a feeling of panic" around Marvel for months, describing the morale as the worst they had ever seen at any company.

Additionally, Hildy Mesnick and her staff that oversees the youth line, including such books as *Barbie*, will move operations to Welsh Publishing (acquired by Marvel in Fall 1994), and Lynaire Brust's vacant position as Craig Anderson's assistant will remain unfilled.

Approximately 30 titles are expected to be canceled, and more lay-offs are rumored to be planned. No confirmation was given as to which titles would be terminated.

—Ruth Morrison

COMPANY UPDATES

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM
The Cerebus story "Reads" from *Cerebus* #175-#186 will be collected into trade paperback this April. "Reads" will be available in both a regular edition for $17 and a signed and numbered edition at $28.

AC COMICS
Coming in April is *FEMForce* #83 where Paragon and Ms. Victory, on the verge of a romantic relationship, spend a relaxing vacation in Aspen. But a casual trip is turned into a major battle for survival....Also in April, the Scarlet Scorpion will jump into his own comic. And right away he's got a tough decision—join the underworld army of Mr. Brimstone or remain immobilized by nerve gas for the rest of his life. What's a hero to do?

ARCHIE COMICS
Later this year, the name of Jughead's baby sister—whose nickname's been Jellybean for over a year now—will be revealed. The truth comes out in a two-part story starting in *Jughead* #71, shipping in May, and concluding with the long-anticipated revelation in #72, shipping in June. Craig Boldman does the scripting on both issues, while Stan Goldberg and Mike Esposito share the art chores....*Betty* #27 holds a new appearance of Archie's answer to the Bad Girl craze—Betty Cooper, Super Sleuther! The clever Ms. Cooper will investigate a sabotage mystery in the story by writer Bob Bolling and artist Doug Crane.

AUGUST HOUSE
March's releases feature covers by popular artists: *The Dark* #2—in which the Dark unleashes his war on crime in New York—sports a foil-enhanced cover by Mike Zeck, and *Foodang* #2—where the "clown with a gun" and his new partner Maude take on the Expectorator—has a Ben Edlund foil-enhanced cover, with Edlund's first published comic art since his animated TV series *The Tick* began.

BLACKOUT COMICS
Blackout will be coming out with three new titles in '95. *Extremes of Violet* hit the stands in December and will continue with two more issues coming out in February and April....Coming in March is a two-issue *Lady Vampré* mini-series. The first issue will be black & white, but will conclude in color this May....Also added to the list of Blackout's comics in April is a new crime fighting duo—*Ms. Cyanide & Ice*. These two private investigators stumble onto the identity of a mastermind who has his sights set on taking over the world. The world's only hope rests on the shoulders of these two Bad Girls.

BONGO COMICS
The "Rise and Fall of Krustyland!" storyline climactically concludes in March's *Krusty Comics* #3. It looks like only luck can save "the most Krustabulous place on Earth." This flip-book, which has a Sideshow Mel story on its flip side, is by Mili Smythe, Jamie Angell, and Matt Groening and goes for $2.25.

CARTOON BOOKS
Shipping at the end of February is *Bone* #18, which tells the second part of "Gran'Ma's Story." More secrets will be

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Words and Pictures Museum Reopens in New Home

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles co-creator **Kevin Eastman** had a dream. He envisioned a place where comic book original art would be displayed in a surrounding as beautiful as any museum. His dream has now become reality in Northampton, Mass.

In 1992, Eastman opened the **Words and Pictures Museum** in an historic building known as the Roundhouse. It soon became obvious that the building was too small and bigger quarters were needed.

This past New Year's Eve, the Museum reopened in a refurbished, four-story building, right on Main Street.

Before entering the front door, visitors know they're in for something special. The museum's windows feature silhouettes of instantly recognizable comic characters. In the front window is a unique bird's-eye view of Eastman's old studio. The entire display is turned on its side so passersby are given the impression that they're looking down through skylights on a roof.

If the outside is considered interesting, then the inside is downright fascinating.

The journey begins in a cave complete with drawings that represent the beginning of "sequential art." From there it's a quick elevator ride to the fourth floor: a large, wood-floored hall designed to emulate the Louvre in France. Here, as in France, you will find all the great masters. The difference being that the masters here have names like Kirby, Severin, Bodé, and Miller. Eastman describes this area as the "take your breath away" floor, and he's not exaggerating.

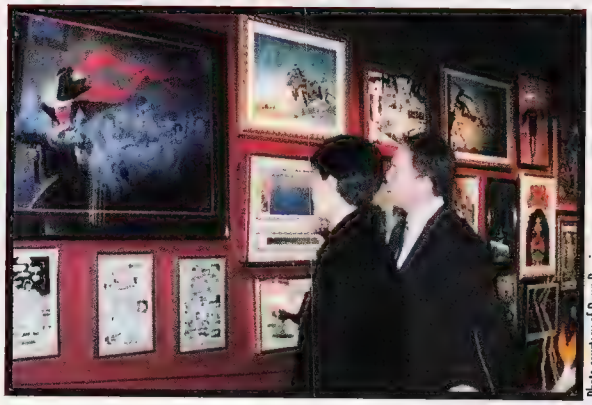
Photo courtesy of Doug Rossi

Get a glimpse of some original art at the Words and Pictures Museum in Northampton, Mass.

One flight down are more works of art and an area to house "special" showings. At times, it will be open to all visitors while other times restricted to just adults or children. The opening display is definitely for "adults only," as the racy work of Olivia DeBerardinis is showcased in a show titled "Stiletto Heroes."

There are also interactive comic games and a "blackboard" which allows you to take a fax of your drawing home with you.

Entry to the Words and Pictures museum is just $3 for adults and even less for kids, a small price to pay for viewing such a beautiful collection of comic art.

—Doug Rossi

revealed about Gran'Ma Ben, Thorn, and the ever-cryptic Red Dragon.

COMICO

Comico, which ceased publishing comics in 1993, is set to return to the industry with all guns blazing. With a launch date of May, in which its first mini-series *Oblivion* begins, the company hopes to shake up the market like never before. *Elementals* fans will cheer for the return of the title in two forms: a graphic novel called *Ghost of a Chance*, shipping in June with a cover painted by Alex Ross, and an ongoing series starting in July, with art by Tony Daniel (*X-Force*). Co-creator Bill Willingham will write *Ghost*; co-creator Jack Herman, the series.

CONTINUITY COMICS

"Let all who do not respect humanity enough...beware the Knighthawk," reads the tag line to Continuity's *Knighthawk*, a Neal Adams creation to be published under Acclaim's new Windjammer imprint starting in April. This six-issue mini-series features an explosive battle between Knighthawk and his monstrous foe Nemo, and its last two issues will reveal the hero's origin. While Adams contributes the covers, plotting, and some interior art to issues #1 and #2, the title's story and dialogue is by Peter Stone, and pencils by Ernesto Infante.

DARK HORSE COMICS

The Dark Horse-produced x-over *Superman vs. Aliens* #1, written and drawn by Dan Jurgens, ships in May....Frank Miller and Geof Darrow's Big Guy character debuts in Mike Allred's *Madman Comics* #6....Despite numerous delays, Miller and Darrow's *Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* #1 is expected to ship in May....April's *Danger Unlimited* trade paperback collecting last year's mini-series will contain a new surprise ending.

Elementals ™ & © Comico

DARK MOON PRODUCTIONS

A slew of new titles will be gracing the stands from Dark Moon, starting in April with *Inovators*—the team of the future. Written by Tom Sniegoski (*Vengeance of Vampirella*) and pencils by Cesar Feliciano....Also in April, *Theispian* will be finding its way to you. With pencils by Zoe Rochelle and written by Steven Kendrick, it's where, according to Dark Moon, "the mysterial evil finds reality."

DC COMICS

Creator John Byrne has confirmed rumors that he is taking over *Wonder Woman* sometime this summer, although DC has not announced it and has no comment on it. More news as this develops....Artist Ron Lim (*Silver Surfer*) has moved to DC, starting with pencils for April's *Hawkman* #21, and continuing on the title's covers starting with #22. Lim will also do guest-shots on *Green Lantern* and *Flash*....A new quarterly Superman title, *Superman: Man of Tomorrow*, by Roger Stern and Tom Grummett debuts in May. It is unknown at this time whether or not it will be a continuing installment of the other four Superman titles or a stand-alone book....Chris Claremont's long awaited *Sovereign Seven* ongoing series debuts in May, with art by Dwayne Turner (*Wolverine*). Though this book is creator-owned, it is set in the DC Universe—Darkseid appears in the first issue.

EVENT COMICS

The Kid Death and Fluffy Spring Break Special stars the scariest kid in the neighborhood and his enormous cybernetic dog as they go vacationing in Fort Lauderdale. Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti provide the story, and Rick Parker (*Beavis & Butt-Head*) provides the interior art. The special ships in April with a $2.50 cover price....Congrats to Event for its cutting edge appearance on MTV News in January!

EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

Parody Press continues to poke fun at just about

Wizard Fan Award Winners Announced

The winners of the **1994 Wizard Fan Awards** are in, as voted by our readers! The winners are as follows:

Favorite Penciler—Todd McFarlane; Favorite Inker—Scott Williams; Favorite Colorist—Steve Oliff, Favorite Painter—Joe Jusko; Favorite Cover Artist—Joe Quesada; Favorite Letterer—Tom Orzechowski; Favorite Writer—Frank Miller; Favorite Editor—Bob Harras; Favorite Hero—Spawn; Favorite Heroine—Rogue; Favorite Villain—Violator; Favorite Villainess—Catwoman; Favorite Supporting Male Character—Robin; Favorite Supporting Female Character—Mary Jane Parker; Most Improved Male Character—Wolverine; Most Improved Female Character—Catwoman; Favorite Story—*X-Men* #30; Favorite Story Arc—"Fatal Attractions," running through the X-Books; Favorite Ongoing Title—*Spawn*; Most Improved Ongoing Title—*Green Lantern*; Favorite One-Shot or Specialty Book—Image's *Spawn/Batman*; Favorite Mini-Series—*Gen13*; Favorite Cover—*Ninjak* #1; Favorite Publisher—Marvel Comics; Favorite Trading Cards—Ultra X-Men (Fleer); Favorite Toy Line—X-Men (Toy Biz); and Favorite TV Program—*X-Men* (Fox).

Congratulations to all winners, an' we'll see ya next year! —John B. Lacey

X-Men™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

X-Men #30 was voted as the favorite story of the year as a result of the Wizard Fan Awards.

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Out-of-Print *Magic* Cards Revived

Rejoice *Magic* fans, the out-of-prints are back! ***Magic: The Gathering*'s** long-awaited seventh set, ***Chronicles***, will be reviving out-of-print cards from all the previous sets—*Arabian Nights, Antiquities, Legends, The Dark,* and *Fallen Empires*. Scheduled for release this summer, *Chronicles* will be an unlimited, white-bordered run sold in two-dollar, 12-card boosters. Basic lands will not be reprinted—nor will the game-breaking Moxes—though enthusiasts can look forward to seeing more cards from the ever-popular *Legends* set than any other expansion.

In other card-related news, **Todd McFarlane's Spawn** trading cards are here! WildStorm Productions proudly presents the 150-card, oversized (2 1/2" x 4 1/2") set commemorating *Spawn*'s first 25 issues. With art by **Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, J. Scott Campbell, Bill Sienkiewicz, Jae Lee, George Pérez, Joe Quesada, Travis Charest, Tim Bradstreet, Dave Cockrum, Jerry Ordway, Paul Smith, Ken Steacy**, and Toddy himself (not to mention about two dozen others!), this set is sure to be a fan favorite.

—Mike Searle

LAPHAM Dodges *Stray Bullets*

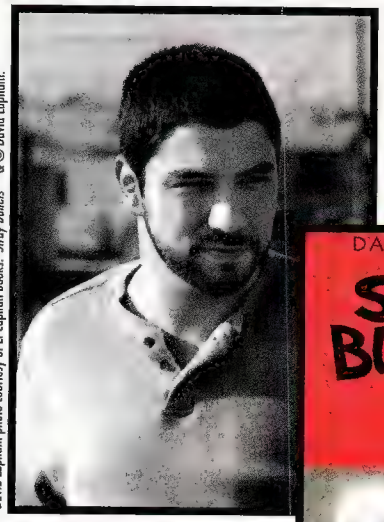
Joining the ranks of creators who have chosen to publish their own work, as opposed to selling or licensing it to others, former Valiant and Defiant artist **David Lapham** has formed El Capitán Books and announced its first project, ***Stray Bullets* #1**. The fledgling title will come out firing in March.

Lapham, whose previous credits include *Harbinger* and *Warriors of Plasm*, described the book as "a breakthrough portrayal of contemporary life—its sorry heroes and its unsuspecting victims." The "darkly comic story" is drawn in a somewhat more shadowed style than what Lapham fans might expect.

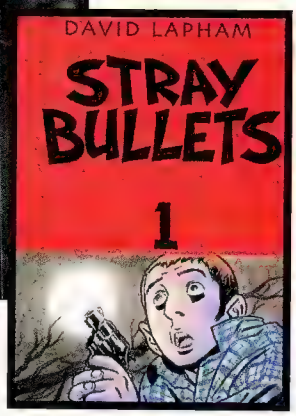
"It's not so different that it isn't me; it's just the subject matter is different. I wanted to give it a different feel from a superhero comic book," Lapham said. He told *Wizard* he wanted both a story and an art style that broke from his previous mold. "All the stuff I've done before has been other people's ideas. This is me—stories I want to do—a little more realistic and, at the same time, surrealistic."

Some might think this a dangerous time to be taking the plunge into self-publishing, but Lapham isn't worried: "I think there's a lot of people willing to try different things now; this is aimed at a different market from the one Marvel or DC is aiming at."

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill



David Lapham photo courtesy of El Capitan Books. *Stray Bullets*™ & © David Lapham.



David Lapham (above) goes solo on Stray Bullets.

anybody and everybody with *Skin*[13] #1 and *Zen vs. Michael Jack-Zen* #1 coming out in April. *Skin*[13], by Bill Maus, introduces Grungy, Burnt-Out, Freeferall, Painmaker, and Furchild, while the King of Pop bumps gloves with Zen in *Zen vs. Michael Jack-Zen* #1, by Don Chin and Bill Maus....Over at Entity Comics, *The All-New Zen Intergalactic Ninja* #2 is the first comic ever to come polybagged with a phone card. You can use the card, which features Zen as depicted by series artist Joel Orbeta, to call up a toll-free number and register to win a number of Zen prizes. The issue ships in April for $4.95, although a regular edition (sans phone card) is available for $2.50....George Pérez does the cover to *Aster* #0 shipping in May.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

Zero Zero, the new bi-monthly anthology book, makes its debut this March. This 60-page monster features stories illustrated by such familiar faces as David Holzman (*Raw*), Mike Diana (*Boiled Angel*), and posthumously Charles Bukowski. Future issues will spotlight the works of David Mazzucchelli, Rick Altergott, Jim Woodring, and Chris Ware. And, hey, it's for mature readers.

HARRIS COMICS

April's *Vengeance of Vampirella* #13 features the conclusion of the "Passion Play" story, in which Vampi and Sgt. Blight use clues to hunt down the female vigilante Passion. Written by Tom Sniegoski, with pencils by Kirk Van Wormer and a cover by Buzz. The spinoff book to *Vampi*, *Hyde 25*, starring four survivors of attacks by users of the mayhem-inspiring drug Hyde 25, also begins in April. Both *Vampi* #13 and *Hyde 25* #0—written by Sniegoski and drawn by Jim Webb and Buzz—will be $2.95.

HEROIC COMICS

Heroic, publisher of titles like *Flare* and *The Tigress*, will be switching gears and putting all of its energies into a multimedia/CD-ROM line. Users will be able to play with the company's heroes, including the Champions. More details as they are released.

IMAGE COMICS

•Highbrow Entertainment

Shipping in May is *Savage Dragon* #13, this time by Erik Larsen, as opposed to the #13 that Jim Lee has done....June sees the launch of three new four-issue mini-series: *Star*, by Tom and Mary Bierbaum, Ben Herrera, and Mike Christian; *Deadly Duo* by Erik Larsen and John Cleary; and *SuperPatriot* by Keith Giffen, Tom and Mary Bierbaum, and Dave Johnson.

•Shadowline Ink

Straight from their appearance in *ShadowHawk* #15, the Others jump into their own series this March, with *The Others* #0 priced at only $1....Those wacky bad guys jump straight from the pages of *ShadowHawk*, into their own ongoing series with *The Regulators* #1 by Kurt Busiek and Ron Randall shipping in June....With the release of *ShadowHawk* #18 in May, you can witness the death of ShadowHawk!

•Todd McFarlane Productions

X-Force artist Tony Daniel is expected to come aboard as the artist to the Spawn mini-series *Bloodfeud* written by Alan Moore, about a conflict with vampires. McFarlane has said that Daniel will be doing more projects for his studio in the future, perhaps one with Neil Gaiman doing the writing.

• Top Cow Productions Inc.

Top Cow added the Top Ten title *Pitt* to its production schedule, assuming all responsibilities from Full Bleed Studios. Dale Keown will continue to serve as writer and artist on a regular basis....Top Cow president Marc Silvestri was scheduled to be featured on a spot on NBC's *Today* show. No air date for the spot, which focused on Silvestri and the studio, has yet to be announced.

The Others™ & © Jim Valentino

•WildStorm Productions

The WildStorm crossover kicking off in May is called "WildStorm Rising," and will lead directly into the catastrophic events originally foreshadowed in *StormWatch* #25. Each crossover book will include two WildStorm

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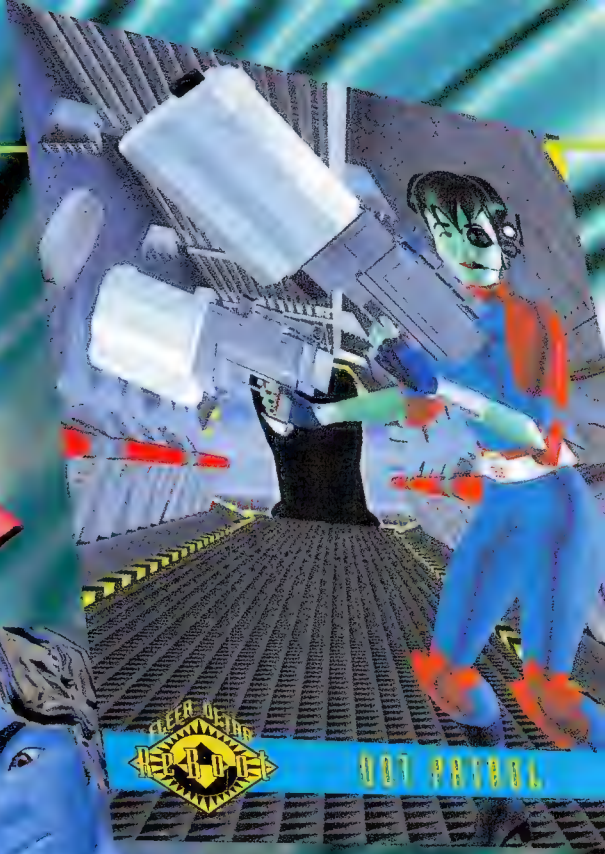

VIDWINDOW

ON LINE MARCH 1995

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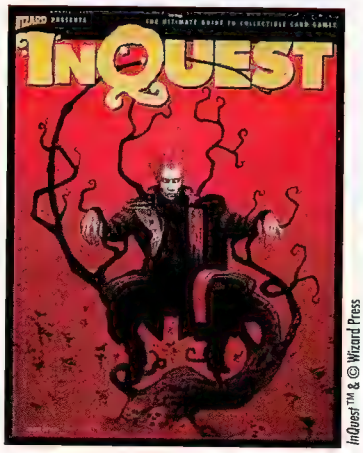
WIZARD Launches Ongoing InQuest

Wizard Press proudly announces the April debut of its newest magazine, ***InQuest***, a monthly fantasy gaming magazine devoted to the best in card collectibles and roleplaying. "*InQuest*'s committed to bringing you the most exciting stories out there," said **Mike Searle**, editor of *InQuest*. "Hey, how can we not—we're all big-time fans!"

With that said, issue #1 is packed with more fantasy material than Rivendell's library. There's a feature interview with **Tom Wänerstrand**, *Magic* artist and production manager of Wizards of the Coast; a "History of Vampires" article, looking at myths and comparing famous vampires down through the ages; a chaos game pitting *Magic*, *Spellfire*, *Jyhad*, *Star Trek*, *Illuminati*, and *Uno* against one another; a "fantasy" cast for a *Lord of the Rings* movie; and a "Killer Deck" *Magic* column with play tips and deck-building suggestions. Plus, there's also a contest which gives you a chance to win the entire *Magic: The Gathering* run—every single card! All this behind a **John Bolton** vampire cover!

Oh, and not to mention the best darn gaming card price guide in the land!

—John B. Lacey ☆



InQuest™ & © Wizard Press

January's InQuest Special *(right) proved good enough for more.*

collector cards: one of 11 new painted cards and one random card from the WildStorm Gallery set shipping in May....The new *Grifter* series written by Steve Seagle, will contain art by Ryan Benjamin and Tom McWeeney. *Team 7—Objective: Hell*, will be a 3-part mini-series written by Chuck Dixon and penciled by Chris Warner of Dark Horse's *X* fame. Both series will be launched as part of the "WildStorm Rising" crossover....Congrats should also be extended to Jim Lee for his rockin' appearance on MTV News last January!

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Black Hole #1, by Charles Burns, ships in March and tells the tale of a nightmarish reality where a disease grotesquely disfigures teenagers. And it's geared towards you mature reader people.

LIGHTNING COMICS

Lightning recently introduced Insomnia, a new, horror- and supernatural-oriented imprint, to its line. It all begins in March with the *Catfight* series, featuring a Bad Girl-type warrior named Catfight, who is trapped in a nightmarish dimension. As a special incentive, fans who buy two copies of *Catfight* #1 can send one to Lightning—along with the store receipt and an envelope with return postage—and it'll be signed, numbered, and certified by Steve Zyskowski, the book's writer. Meanwhile, Lightning has been successfully sticking with black-and-white interiors, but it will return to full-color books with July's *Hellina: Kiss of Death* #1. This issue, and *Catfight* #1, are by Zyskowski and artist Terral Lawrence.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

The second issue of *Razor: Burn*, which features a cover by *Catwoman*'s Jim Balent, details Razor's heated hunt for Stryke, her sister. A section of the print run of Stryke's own special, which uncovers some secrets about the assassin's life, will ship with an alternate cover. Both *Razor: Burn* #2—written and penciled by Everette Hartsoe and inked by Mike Taylor—and *Stryke* #0—by writer Hartsoe and penciler Richard Pollard—ship in March at a $3.00 price.

MALIBU COMICS

Mike Zeck returns to monthly comics in April as the penciler of the ongoing *Eliminator* series, whose star is a martial artist with a cybernetic arm....April is "Mantra Month" and it ties into *Mantra* #20, *Mantra: Spear of Destiny* #1 (of 2), *NecroMantra/Lord Pumpkin* #1 (of 4), and *Ultraverse Year Zero: The Death of the Squad* #1 (of 4).

Catfight™ & © Joseph A. Zyskowski

MAXIMUM PRESS

At the recent IADD Conference in New Orleans, Maximum Press announced plans for several upcoming projects. Included among them are *Battlestar Galactica* and *Cybrid*, both coming in June. Cybrid was first introduced in Rob Liefeld's *Extreme* #0. Scheduled for later this year are creator-owned projects from Todd Nauck (*Badrock*) on *Wildguard* and Brian Denham with *My Name is Mud*. *Supreme Apocalypse* is also slated for June with a four-part storyline revealing all about Supreme and Prophet.

MIRAGE PUBLICATIONS

The six-issue mini-series *Construct*, by Paul Jenkins and Leo Duranona, tells the unique story of a society divided into mechatypes. *Construct* #3 ships in May.

PENTHOUSE COMIX

An eight-page Batman story by Moebius originally done for DC, will now be appearing in *Penthouse Comix* #7, in May, under the title "Ratman Meets Depressman," with the art altered to meet copyright restrictions.

RIVAL PRODUCTIONS

A loose resistance forms to thwart off an alien invasion, in *Eye of the Storm* #2 shipping in March. This state-of-the-art comic, containing 3-D backgrounds, is by John Knowles, Shane Caudle, Randall Ryan, and Brian Sellers.

TEKNO•COMIX

April sees the first issue of Neil Gaiman's *Teknophage*. This ongoing series, starring the bad guy himself straight out of the pages of *Mr. Hero*, is written by Rick Veitch, with art by Bryan Talbot and Angus McKie....Shipping in May are John Jakes's *Mullkon Empire*, by Kate Worley and John Watkiss, and Mickey Spillane's *Mike Danger*, by Max Allan Collins and Eduardo Barreto. *Mike Danger* #1 sports a nifty Frank Miller cover....There will be both limited and deluxe editions made of the fourth issues of *Mr. Hero*, *Primortals*, and *Lost Universe*. The limited editions feature variant covers and trading cards. The deluxe editions are the same as the limited editions, except instead of trading cards, there are coupons that can be traded in (you need all three) for a steel edition of *Teknophage* #1.

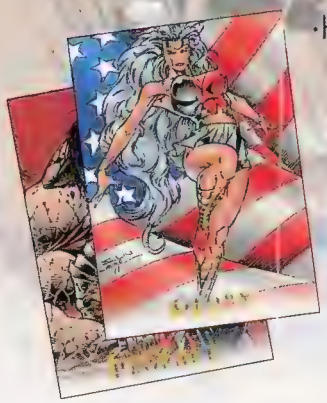
TOPPS COMICS

Jurassic Park Annual #1 ships in May, featuring two new dino-tales. Cover by Michael Golden.

THERE'S NO PRESSURE TO BUY.

(YOU HAVE 'TIL THE COUNT OF THREE)

Youngblood Trading Cards from SkyBox. Shooting into Stores Near You—April 1995.



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Odds of finding Wiggle cards approx mately 1:8 packs; SkyDisc™ approximately 1:72 packs; Win-A-Day cards approximately 1:1.2mm packs (see display box for further details).

Voices of a GENERATION

J. Scott Campbell and Brandon Choi talk about the future of *Gen13* and how it will be different from the original mini-series.

by Jeff Lang and Andrew Kardon

A Gen-uine success. Gen-erally appealing. A team for this Gen-eration. Regardless of the cutesy names describing last summer's five-issue *Gen13* mini-series from Image Comics, the one thing that is quite apparent is the genuine enthusiasm of the book's creators, as well as the wealth of ideas they have in store for the *Gen13* ongoing series set to debut in March.

"We definitely don't have a shortage of ideas," says penciler J. Scott Campbell. "We just have to organize them and make them flow, hopefully in a believable fashion."

What may be hard to believe for Campbell and the rest of the creators behind *Gen13*, is the huge success their series has garnered in just a short time. The original mini-series was caught up in so many delays and snags—first with legal problems due to a similarity in names between Marvel Comics's *Generation X* and *Gen13*'s original title of *Gen-X*, and then with Image's new "three issues must be completely finished before solicitation" rule—that the success of the project is even more of a testament to the efforts of its creative team.

"I think it became popular because at the time we were doing the book, we were doing something that a lot of comic books weren't doing," says Campbell, "and that was taking a more light-hearted, less cynical approach to comic books, and trying to [do] a book that was more character-oriented. I think we gave a good balance of elements that weren't being portrayed in too many comic books at the time."

Writer Brandon Choi agrees: "*Gen13* is a very conscious contrast to some of the other titles in the WildStorm Universe. When we first created *WildC.A.T.s*, *StormWatch*, and *Deathblow*, they were geared towards the darker, more cynical side of comics. But once we got to do those stories and got them out of our systems, we decided we wanted to work in a different genre."

All characters ™ & © Aegis Entertainment Inc

Having seemingly come out of nowhere, Campbell and Choi quickly jumped into the spotlight and prepared themselves for a *Gen13* regular series. Once again, however, the first issue met delays, and it's believed by the team that pressure to fulfill fan expectations was the cause.

"I think that's why it's been taking us so long," says Campbell. "I think we were supposed to come out with the regular series in October or November, but we just kept pushing it off—maybe there was an element of panic there."

But now, Campbell believes, the panic has worn off and the team is set to begin again. But will the ongoing series be a carbon copy of the original, or a completely different view of the team which we've only just begun to know?

"Well, it's an interesting dilemma," Campbell reflects. "We're in the position where the philosophy 'If it's not broke, don't fix it' really applies, but, at the same time, both Brandon and I are anxious to do something different with the characters. The concepts we're coming up with [are] certainly exciting and intriguing to me. We're doing some pretty cool things that we weren't doing in the mini-series which, hopefully, will still get the same kind of [reaction]. The elements that made *Gen13* popular—the characters and the way we tell the story—are still there. So, hopefully the fans will like this just as much, if not more, than the mini-series."

One significant difference between the mini-series and the ongoing series is that *Gen13* co-creator Jim Lee will be considerably less involved. "I get to be the number one fan," Lee explains. "They call me 'Number One,' which means, basically, we sit down and talk about things. They tell me what they want to do, and I give them my feedback. That's my role on *Gen13*, partly because I trust them implicitly in terms of carrying through the original idea. They know the characters better than anyone and have worked on them the longest. I was much more involved in the mini-series, but they'll do fine without me."

The characters themselves include Caitlin Fairchild, Roxy Spaulding (Freefall), Bobby Lane (Burnout), Sarah Rainmaker, and "Grunge" Chang. These five teenagers were unknowingly part of a scientific program run by the secret organization International Operations (I.O.), which indirectly gave them all superhuman powers. They are the children of the Gen12 project, which performed similar experiments on their parents, who then passed their mutated genes down to them, thus gaining the moniker Gen13. After all five began to manifest powers—Fairchild is larger and stronger than your average female, Freefall has the power of levitation, Burnout controls and emits fire, Rainmaker handles (you guessed it) rain, and Grunge has the power of controlling and rearranging molecules—they escaped I.O.'s clutches. Along the way, they met up with the mysterious John Lynch, one of the few remaining survivors of Gen12 as well as a former member of the covert assault team known as Team 7, who helped them successfully make their escape.

The team (clockwise from back left): Burnout, Rainmaker, Fairchild, Grunge, Freefall.

Other changes in store for the team, according to Campbell, involve some physical ones. "We kind of redesigned Rainmaker. We wanted to make her a more important player on the team, and more interesting-looking. So, she's probably the one that's [been altered] the most, [by changing] her costume, and she has longer hair now. And we gave Grunge a little bit more of a superhero costume. There'll be plenty of stories where he's still just wearing jeans, but if it actually comes down to them officially dressing up in superhero outfits, he's sort of got one.

"The big thing about this group of kids," continues Campbell, "is none of them knew anything about being superheroes until they got wrapped up in this whole situation. A lot of their past is very superhero-oriented, because they are all children of [the original members of] Team 7, and I think that's a big element of what we'll be exploring in the regular series. A lot of them don't even know who their parents are, exactly. I would kind of like to see some of the characters from Team 7—those that are their parents—kind of enter the story in a fashion that works for the book. Obviously Deathblow, Grifter, and Backlash—any one of these characters could be some of the parents of Gen13."

The first issue of the ongoing series picks up six months after August's *Gen13* #0 ended, with Lynch and the kids deciding to plant roots in the San Diego, Calif., area. Campbell's base of operations, Jim Lee's Homage Studios, is based there, Campbell admits, "so we figured we'll be able to draw the sights. Also, we wanted to pick an area where a team hasn't been based so far. We want Gen13 to be on their own and not cross over with other comics too much. We want them to have their own little world with their own little problems, and we figured San Diego was a good place for that to happen." There will be a semi-crossover during the series itself, though, he adds. "We play a small role in

the [upcoming] 'WildStorm Rising' crossover. Our second issue is technically a crossover issue, but because it ties in early on in the [crossover] series, our role is very minor in it. Look for an element of the story to tie in with the crossover, but for the most part it's still kind of a self-contained story. It's not like it's a book that if you don't get it, the whole [crossover] doesn't make sense."

As for future storylines within *Gen13*, Campbell assures us that "the storyline is gonna be a little different. We have a whole new spectrum of villains that we're gonna be introducing, ranging from some villains that are very serious to other ones that are kinda wacky." The first issue introduces us to a mysterious new villain whose power is the ability to bring out any evil he finds in a person. "If he gets hold of any of Gen13—especially someone like Fairchild—and brings out the evil in them, well, that would be a real accomplishment for this guy. In the first issue, he comes very close to getting Freefall under his control."

"Then, in the second issue," Choi continues, "we'll reveal a little more about the kids themselves, their personality quirks, and more about Lynch's past, his life before he became director of I.O., and how some of those actions will have consequences in his new life."

"One of the things we've already established," Campbell says, "is that Lynch has a past where he used to be a bounty hunter for superpowered villains, something he did in the short period between quitting Team 7 and joining I.O. Occasionally, some of these villains will break out and want revenge, which is the basis for the second issue. There's this one character, Helmet, who has broken out of prison and is hunting Lynch, which means, of course, that he encounters Gen13. Helmet is a very large, massive character, a kind of mole guy who rolls up into a ball, tunnels underground, and causes earthquakes. They'll love him in San Diego," he laughs.

Mr. Lynch.

The third major story arc will pit Gen13 against the villainous organization from WildC.A.T.s known as the Coda, in an artifact-hunting adventure that Choi and Campbell can only describe as an Indiana Jones-type story. Naturally, I.O. is still looking for its missing SPBs (Super Powered Beings), so it won't be long before I.O.'s devious director Ivana Baiul turns up with another team (remember the men and women in stasis tubes at the end of issue #5?). And wherever Ivana is, you can be sure that her cronies, the brother and sister tag team of Threshold and Bliss, are not too far behind.

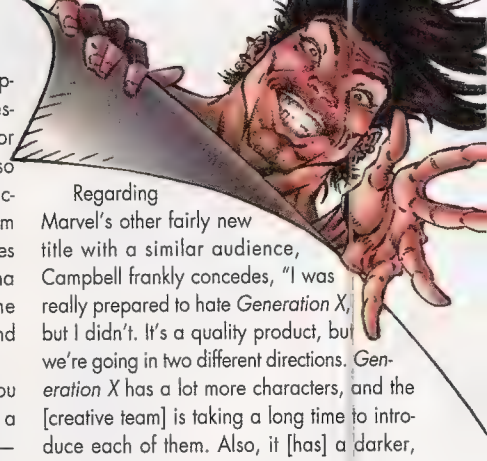
"I think you'll see Bliss sooner than you see Threshold," says Campbell. "We have a storyline planned with Bliss and Burnout—something we kind of alluded to in [the mini-series's] fifth issue; she cast a weird kind of spell on him—that we'll hopefully develop when she comes back to the book. Probably around the same time Ivana comes back."

Characterization and relationships were a large part of what made *Gen13* so popular, and they're something that Campbell would like to continue using. For example, expect some friction between team members, as living together is not as much fun as it might have seemed. But the creators won't just dwell on the negatives.

"There'll definitely be more with Freefall and Grunge," he says, "because that's something we started from the very beginning and want to keep going. I kind of want it to be that kind of *Moonlighting*- or *Cheers*-type of relationship. I don't think it's a driving force of the book, but I think it's a nice little element that makes the book what it is. There will be some friction between Rainmaker and Burnout. I think that's gonna go in a direction people probably aren't expecting; people'll probably be surprised with that one. And with Fairchild, we'll work on stuff in a future storyline where she kind of gets wooed by a guy who's not necessarily on the team. Look forward to that by our third or fourth issue."

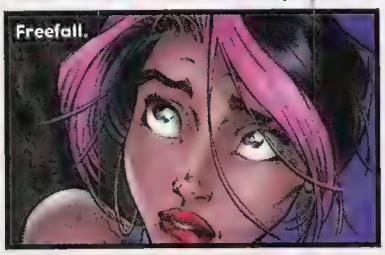
The series itself, according to Campbell, will hopefully still be suited for all audiences.

"I always compare what I'm trying to do to the Spielberg movies I enjoy—like the Indiana Jones films—because Spielberg's always been brilliant at being able to basically get every single age group into his movies. There's something in there for kids, grown-ups, older people. I think the cool thing about comic books is that you have adults and children reading them, and I think it'd be kind of cool if we put elements in there that they both enjoy and find entertaining."



Regarding Marvel's other fairly new title with a similar audience, Campbell frankly concedes, "I was really prepared to hate *Generation X*, but I didn't. It's a quality product, but we're going in two different directions. *Generation X* has a lot more characters, and the [creative team] is taking a long time to introduce each of them. Also, it [has] a darker, more serious tone. Not that we're doing an Archie book, but I don't think our characters are taking themselves as seriously. I think there's room in the comic book universe for both of us to exist and be successful."

As for his own particular characters, Campbell notes, "In issue #2, I have a scene where Grunge and Burnout are skateboarding. I'm trying to get that whole culture—to dress them in the right kind of look, and do their hair right. I want that age group to identify with these kids, doing the same kind of stuff and listening to the same kind of music that they do."


Freefall.

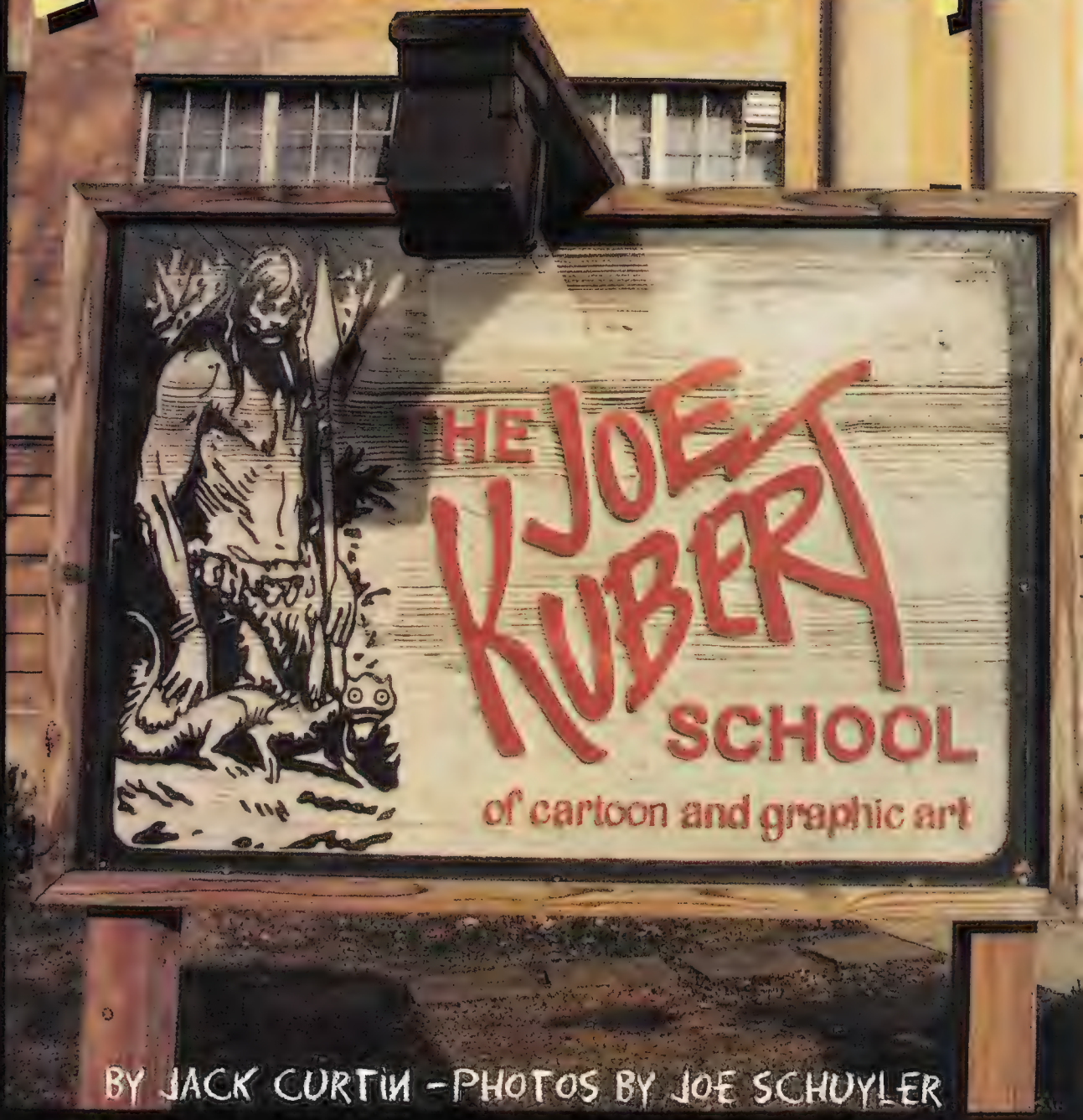
Regardless of their audience, the creators behind *Gen13* are really eager to tell the multitude of stories they have floating around.

"We have a lot of ideas for this book, and I'm not sure how many of them are gonna make it," admits Campbell. "I would like this book to have a long-lasting kind of readership, and I would like to stay with the book for a while myself. But it's kind of sad, because I think comic books are in a state now where people don't stick with things too long, and everybody wants that new number one and their favorite artist to move on to a different project. It seems there are very few books out there where it has a continual story with the artist sticking with it, and the reader sticking with it. And I would like our book to become one of those books.

"I think it'll be an interesting and exciting book to read and to follow. If not, well, I guess there's that Burger King job." ☆

Jeff Lang is a freelance writer who lives in the Philadelphia, Pa., area. He also writes comics and is the creator of Roadways *for Cult Press and the Nanny Katie stories in* Dark Horse Presents. *Andrew Kardon, on the other hand, just came off that Burger King job, so lay off him, OK?*

School's



BY JACK CURTIN - PHOTOS BY JOE SCHUYLER

In!

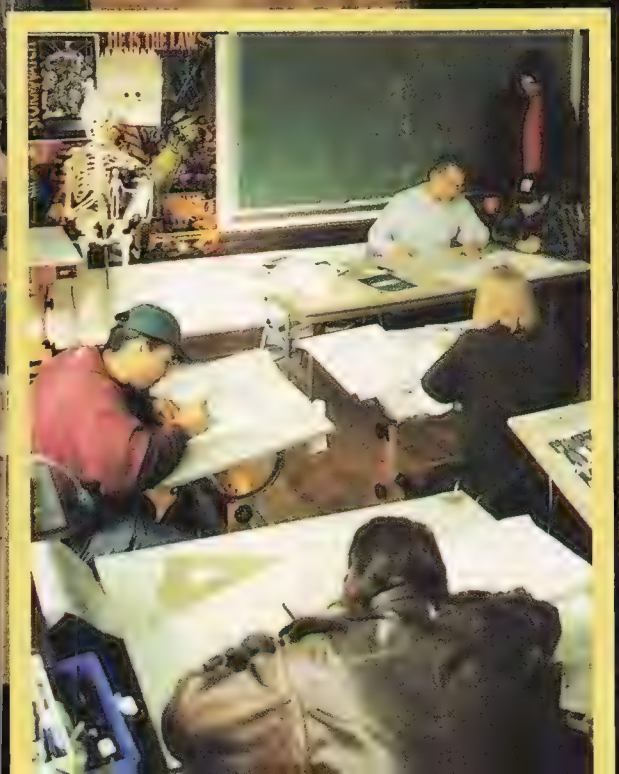
AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE JOE KUBERT SCHOOL OF CARTOON AND GRAPHIC ART, AND WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE IT THERE.

In the end, artist Steve Lieber says, despite all the classes and instruction and guidance, despite all the hours and days and weeks of hard work and discipline, the greatest lesson to be learned wasn't really taught at all, but exemplified by the sight—at once mundane and extraordinary—of a man living what he preached. Joe Kubert in front of a classroom was impressive; Joe Kubert sitting in a classroom was testimony.

"Besides our regular life drawing courses, there were these extra-curricular sessions led by guest artists," Lieber reports, recalling his years at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, "and Joe took almost every one of them with us. He came in, sat down with us, and drew."

In his typical straight-forward fashion, Joe Kubert wants to make it clear that the last thing on his mind in those sessions was inspiring or teaching anyone anything. He was there to draw, to "go back to the well." Where else, he asks, would you expect him to be if there was a chance to learn something new, as well as an opportunity to polish his craft?

He is one of the living legends in an industry that has been blessed with more than its share of the breed. This man, whose curly hair and beard are a lot grayer now than they were when he founded the Kubert School back in 1976, retains the energy and enthusiasm of a man decades younger than the 69 years he marks this September. Probably best known for his work at DC Comics on the Golden Age Hawkman and for his long run on *Sgt. Rock*, Joe Kubert was also one of the pioneers in creator-owned properties: his *Tor*, starring his caveman character, seems to have popped up on the lists of one publisher or another at least once a decade since he first developed the character while aboard a U.S. troop ship bound for Europe back in 1950.



Those works are but a small sampling of a career that has been flourishing for more than half a century and which continues unabated. Of all the Golden Age greats, Kubert is the only one still so actively at work and in great demand, the only one still being approached regularly to take on assignments. While he has been out of the comics mainstream in the past few years, he recently did a six-issue run on Marvel's *Punisher: War Zone* "just to remind people that I'm still around. Of course," he laughs, "half the audience today probably thinks I'm either Adam's or Andy's son," referring to his sons, each an accomplished comics artist in his own right and each a graduate of the Kubert School, Class of '84.

JOE KUBERT: KING OF THE CASTLE.

The commitment to what it means to be a professional artist is an almost palpable subtext to every sentence Joe Kubert utters. "You have to draw every day if you're in this business," he says. "There's not been a day in my professional life that I haven't sat down at the drawing board for at least a little while. And, any chance I get to go to a life drawing class, I take it. You have to keep going back to the basics. If you don't have a fundamental knowledge of what you're doing, if you don't know anatomy backwards and forwards, then you'll never be consistent. You'll get it right one time and wrong the next time. Nobody can succeed in this business by doing one good job, then one bad job, then another good job and so on. [People] always remember the bad job and judge you on it."

That's one of the two basic principles at the Kubert School: learn how to do the job right and then work at it, and work at it some more. You have to keep shoring up the foundation by continually practicing and learning for the rest of your career. The other principle is even more fundamental.

"Essentially, a cartoonist is a storyteller," says Kubert, "and the drawings that he does are secondary to being able to tell a story. That's the most important thing I ever learned, the one insight I'd like to pass along to every student if I can. The job is to communicate, not just to do pretty pictures and say to hell with what the story is about. If you open a comic and there are pictures that just pop out at you but you don't have any idea what you've just read, then that's worthless in terms of what the cartoonist should be doing. I love a lot of the things I see in comics today, but what bothers me—bothers me terribly—is the lack of clarity in terms of storytelling and readability."

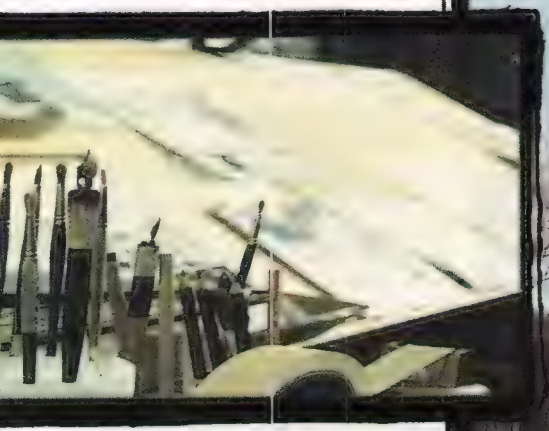
Joe Kubert learned these important lessons the hard way—the only way possible for the men who built the industry in the halcyon days of the Golden Age. He was not quite 12 years old when he started working at Will Eisner's studio in Brooklyn, but he began drawing muscle men on the sidewalks with a piece of chalk when he was only four or five years of age. He taught himself and, more importantly, he was taught—informally—by others.

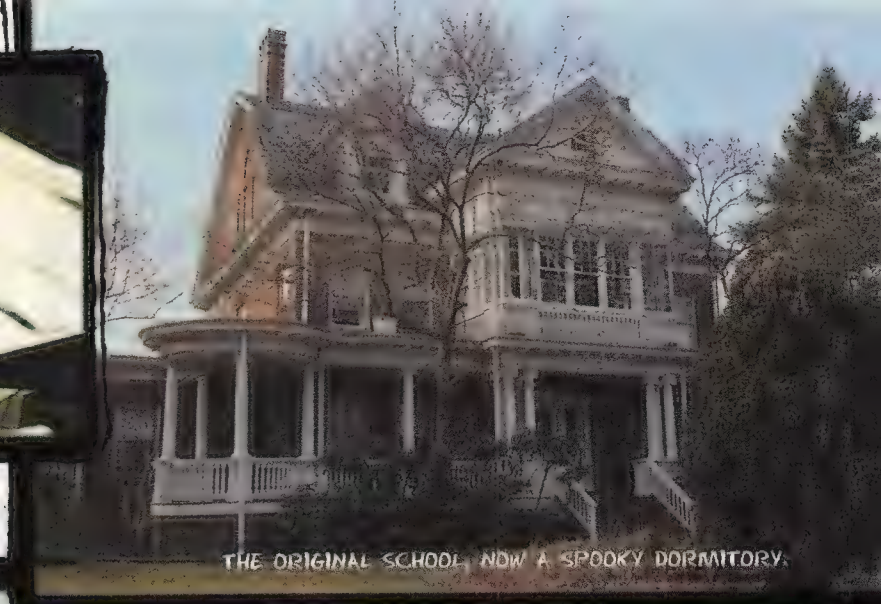
"Everybody I ever met in this business, right from the start, gave me a helping hand," he says. "Tex Blaisdell, for example. He's a guy I've known for almost 60 years. He was working at Eisner's and I'd watch everything he did, sort of picking things up by osmosis. Learning how to do it right was always hit-or-miss, for all of us. You were always looking for somebody to show you the way. I decided I wanted to do something more than that, give something back to the industry. We figured if we could tie up all the advice and guidance I got, just bring it all together at a single place, we could provide an opportunity for anyone willing to make a commitment."

"We" means Joe and wife Muriel, who got their chance when an old 23-room mansion, located only about five minutes from the Kubert home in Dover, New Jersey, came up for sale. "If I hadn't gotten that, I might never have started the school," Kubert admits. "One of the reasons this place has been so successful is because I have never depended upon it for a livelihood, and have always managed to keep it convenient for me and been able to run it the way I want it to be run. It's been a lot more work and taken a lot more time than I expected, but I've always been able to do it my way."

Once he owned the building, Joe began consulting with industry veterans such as Sol Harrison and Jack Adler—publisher and production manager respectively at DC Comics—as well as fellow freelancers, to put together a 10-course curriculum. Muriel took on the job of the school's director, establishing an administrative structure that would earn the school accreditation by the State of New Jersey Department of Education, and the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. She still holds that title today, although now she mostly oversees things via modem from home, while daughter-in-law Debby Kubert functions as the day-to-day administrator.

At the Kubert School, the old saying is reversed: those who can, teach. Joe cajoled such artistic luminaries as Dick Giordano (of Batman fame, other major DC works), Lee Elias (the original *Black Cat*), and Hy Eisman (*The Katzenjammer Kids, Archie*) onto his first staff and has used as many working pros as he can corral every year since. Eisman, the longest term faculty member, is a member of the current staff, as are Irwin Hasen (*Dondi*) and Joe's old pal, Tex Blaisdell (*Little Orphan Annie, Prince Valiant*), both of whom came on board shortly after that first year. Other familiar names include Kubert graduates Kim DeMulder (*Swamp Thing, Doom Patrol*) and Mike Sellers (*Valor, Flash*). "From the

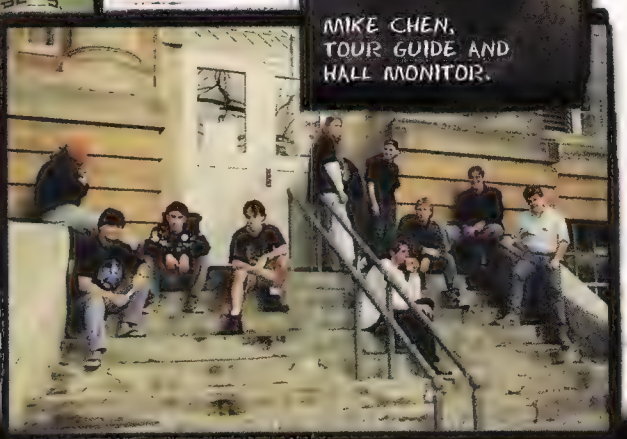




THE ORIGINAL SCHOOL, NOW A SPOOKY DORMITORY.

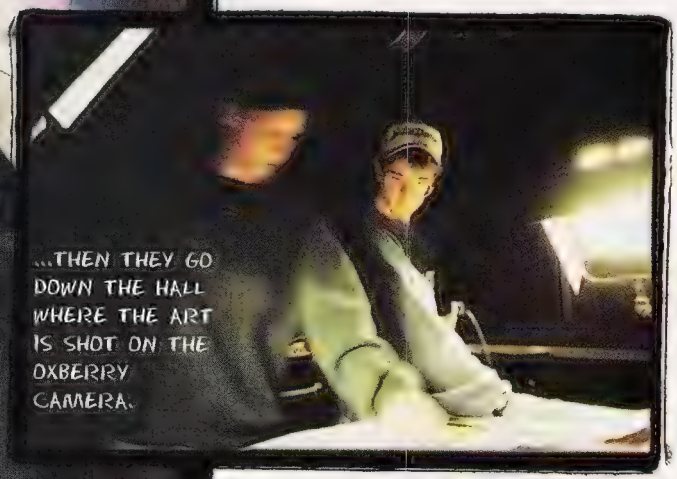
MR. OSTRANDER TELLS THE SECRETS OF STORYTELLING.

MIKE CHEN, TOUR GUIDE AND HALL MONITOR.



SMOKE 'EM IF YA GOT 'EM.

ANIMATION MAJORS DRAW FRAME-BY-FRAME ON A SPECIAL LIGHT TABLE...



...THEN THEY GO DOWN THE HALL WHERE THE ART IS SHOT ON THE OXBERRY CAMERA.

start, I wanted people who were actually making a living in this industry," Kubert says, "guys who could stand up in front of a class and say, 'I do it this way and it works.' People who wanted to learn how to be professionals deserved to be taught by professionals."

While the obvious draw of the Kubert School is for those interested in comics or a related field, Kubert has always stressed that "we want to teach people to be flexible, to have a professional acumen that will enable them to apply their skills to any number of areas, from comics to advertising to book illustration. And in comics themselves, it's not enough to just be able to draw superheroes, you have to be able to do westerns and romance and humor—whatever the market needs at any given moment. We've been making that clear from the day we opened the doors." Toward this end, several faculty members are graphic designers, art directors, or illustrators rather than comics professionals.

The first class at the new school was all of 22 students and the founder never expected to have more than 75 or so enrolled at any one time in what was originally a two-year curriculum. It became apparent almost immediately that the workload was too demanding, and in 1978, the course of study was expanded to three years. The school quickly outgrew its home as well, and Kubert purchased the old Dover High School building in 1983 to meet the needs of an expanding student body (the old mansion is now a dormitory residence for first-year students). Today there are 200 students in the regular daytime program and another 100 or so taking Saturday morning sketch classes and evening workshop programs. That original 22 student total has been fixed as the maximum for any individual class, says Kubert, because "that seems the most we can handle and do the job right."

Since 1980, there have been two courses of study offered, the original Cartoon-Graphics major and a Cinematic Animation major, for which students can apply at the end of the first year. All students take two courses a day, five days a week, between 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., with each session running two hours and 45 minutes. There are no electives, and it is necessary to successfully complete every class in order to graduate.

The first-year curriculum includes basic courses such as Paste-up & Mechanicals, Lettering, and Layout, plus the first of what will be three years' worth of courses for Cartoon-Graphics majors in Basic Drawing, Methods & Materials, and Design, and other instruction geared to success as a working professional. Courses in narrative storytelling, writing, and the business of cartooning are added in the second and third years for these students. Animation majors follow a different curriculum in their second and third years, with instruction in storyboarding, stop-motion animation, color techniques, and computer graphics among the offerings. They, too, receive a class concentrating on the business side of things.

Getting into the school, however, is not an easy task. To be accepted at the school an applicant must present a portfolio containing a minimum of 15 pieces—including color and mixed media, plus cartoon work—and go through two interviews. The interviewing process, once handled exclusively by Kubert himself, is now handled by Mike Chen, a 1981 graduate, who is currently special projects and placement coordinator for the school. "The top priority is not just talent," Chen says, "although they must have that, of course, but applicants must also show that they are willing to learn, willing to grow. Most of our applicants tend to be stubborn individuals—they have to be, to have gotten to this point, in most cases—and they have to understand that we will demand a lot of them." The second interview is designed to allow an applicant to have the time to think things over, to determine in his or her own mind that the Kubert School is the right choice.

"To tell the truth," says Kubert, "more and more we find ourselves in the position of trying to dissuade people from coming here. Last year, for example, we had between 500 and 600 applicants for the first year class, and we

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can't accept more than 110 a year—five class sections—because we just aren't equipped to handle more than that."

Tuition, fees, and art supplies total about $9,000 for each year of study, with another $500 a year for second- and third-year students in the Cinematic Animation curriculum. Qualified students are eligible for Federal Pell Grants and for various student loan programs. There are also various scholarship programs available to applicants, including a $1,000-a-year grant to a selected third-year student, given in the name of Norman Maurer, one of comics' early movers and shakers. The most significant of these scholarships was established by Marvel Comics in 1993, a full three-year annual scholarship.

"Terry Stewart [Marvel President] was here and Mike Chen mentioned something about scholarships in passing, and Terry turned to me and asked, 'Does that mean you'd like me to set up a scholarship?' I just laughed and said he could if he wanted," remembers Kubert, "and a few days later he came back to us with this full three-year plan, something in excess of $25,000." Once a student has been accepted into the school, he can apply for the Marvel scholarship by putting together a portfolio to be judged by Kubert and other members of the faculty. The 10 best are sent on to Marvel, where the final selection is made. The first recipient, Brandon Vietti, of Fresno, CA, is currently a second-year student, and Travis Hill, Easton, PA, is finishing his first scholarship year.

For all its structure and demands upon the students (in addition to six hours of class time each weekday, they should spend an equal number of hours at their drawing boards every weekday), the Kubert School is not a dogmatic operation. "I'm not a professional educator, and I don't pretend to be," admits Kubert. "All I'm doing is telling people who want to listen how I do my thing. And that's what I ask of every instructor who teaches here. I don't want them to tell students anything that they [are unsure of] from their own personal experience. These are people who make a living in this business, and their job is to pass on that which enables them to make a living.

"A couple of times a year, maybe more than that, a student will come up to me and say, 'You know, Joe, you told us that you would tell a story this way, and then in such-and-such's class, he said he'd do it this other way.' And I tell them that's great. 'Now you know my way of doing it and you know his way of doing it. If you're smart enough, you'll take all that and work out your own way of doing it.'"

The Kubert School imprimatur really counts for something, says Chen, who claims that between 90 and 95 percent of each graduating class find employment either directly in the comics industry or in other advertising or illustration slots. The Animation graduates do even better, he notes, with employment rates averaging 98 percent.

Among the Kubert School's more famous graduates are the likes of Tim Truman, Dave Dorman, Steve Bissette, Rick Veitch, Tom Mandrake, Ron Randall, and Jan Duursema. (Duursema, incidentally, is one of the very few female graduates; enrollment at the school reflects the small percentage of women actively involved in the comics industry. Kubert laments that "there are publishers out there actively looking for artists who can bring a woman's perspective to storytelling.")

And there are those who never completed the full three years of study, thanks to major assignments that led them to drop out of the school before finishing. Among the luminaries in this much smaller group are Bart Sears and Lee Weeks.

In many ways, Steven Lieber, who is currently penciling DC Comics's revamped *Hawkman* and a forthcoming three-part *Batman* fill-in, is a typical Kubert graduate. "I was studying business and fine arts at Penn State," Lieber says, "and I was filling my accounting class notebook with sketches instead of notes. I finally decided that if I was going to spend my class time drawing, I ought to make it worthwhile. I'd read a fanzine interview with Steve Bissette about the school and thought it was the place for me—though I have to admit I was put off a bit when he called it a 'cartoonist's monastery' because of the lack of women—so I put together a portfolio and flew over to New Jersey in the summer of 1987 and was accepted."

THE CLAYMATION LAB.

STUDENTS LEARN THE LATEST COMPUTER COLORING TECHNIQUES.

The school's hands-on approach was an invaluable training in how to do comics, he says. "Joe kept going over my stuff with me, prodding and suggesting until it began to dawn on me that he was trying to get me to find the emotional idea for each picture. He'd talk about it in terms of light, of weight, of movement, of texture—he'd nudge the abstract structure of my pictures for clarity and for expression." Lieber further notes that his being associated with the modern version of Hawkman fits right in with other parallels between his career and that of his mentor. "In every class, they say there is one student whose work is most influenced by Joe's style," he says, "and I think I'm that guy in the Class of '90. To make it even more coincidental, before I got the

PETER PARKER NO MORE...WEDDING OF SCOTT & JEAN...THE PHALANX ATTACK...SAVAGE HULK IS BACK...GHOST RIDER REBORN...SPIDER-CLONE RETURNS...JEAN GREY VS. SABRETOOTH...FIGHTING CHANCE...FALL OF THE HAMMER 2099...SCARLET SPIDER VS. VENOM...SUICIDE RUN...MYSTERY OF CENTURY...STARBLAST...

Hawkman assignment, I'd done cavemen, war, and cowboy comics." The reference, obviously, is to Tor, Sgt. Rock, and Kubert's western hero for DC, Firehair.

Of course, the two graduates who immediately come to mind when most fans think about the school are Adam and Andy Kubert. The fact that two of his sons attended the school is still a source of bemusement to Kubert. "I never dreamed they'd end up in this business," he says. "Adam had already graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology and was working as a medical illustrator and was damned good at it. But then he came to me one day and said he wasn't really drawing in that job, just doing renderings and that he wanted to come to the school. Even more amazingly, Andy, who hadn't shown any real interest in drawing at all, came to the school just to learn what it was all about and it turned out that he wanted to go on with an art career as well."

Andy's original intention had been to attend classes for a year to familiarize himself with the school and then work in administration, but instead he stayed the course. "I really liked it once I got into it," Andy says, "though it was pretty tough with my brother in the same class and my father running the place." Adam agrees: "More than anybody, we had to get the work done; we couldn't screw around," he says.

Both have studios in the school building and work there daily, running the risk of being pulled from their drawing boards by Chen, now and then, to fill in for absent instructors. They are also, as might be expected, a drawing card for the students. "It's a good thing for both sides," says Adam, "because the students are, basically, still fans and you can bounce ideas off of them, get their reactions. It's like talking directly to your readers and it keeps you from going stale." Andy laughs that, "students come right up and knock on the door of the studio and ask for advice and before you know it, you've thrown a piece of tracing paper over their drawings and are teaching them."

Among those who've learned a lot at the Kubert School, it turns out, is its founder. "It's funny," Joe says, "but a lot of the things I'd been doing all my career, I'd been doing by gut reactions, by impulse, strictly on reflex. I never had to think about it, never had to put it into words. Once the school started and I had to explain how I do things to other people, that helped clarify it all for me as well. I got a clearer vision of what I was doing, what I wanted to do and how to go about doing it. That's been a great benefit to me."

Benefits to the general student body range from the very basic process of learning just how much they don't know, to an understanding of the principle that there's something to be learned from everyone they meet.

"When I came here, I was surprised to learn how much I didn't know," says third-year student Mark Gonya, from New York. "I'd done a lot of learning on my own, so I came in thinking I was pretty hot, you know, and it was amazing to see how Joe or one of the other teachers could just take a piece of artwork I thought was almost perfect and, with just a few lines, change it into something different, usually better."

Another third-year student, Lother Jones, agrees. "The reality of drawing comics hit me when I got here," he says. "The fact that it was a job, not just a love. I could sit at my drawing board for hours when I was in high school—10 hours a day sometimes—because I liked what I was doing. Here, I learned that that's pretty much what I'll have to do if I want to make it."

A classmate, Matt Larson, points out that "you can learn something from every student here, as well as from the teachers. I was really surprised at the diversity of students who attend this place. I live nearby and figured everybody was going to be like me, local, but there are students from everywhere." Second-year Animation student Kathy Hopler agrees: "Since everybody comes from different places, different backgrounds, everybody has experience at different things, so there's a wealth of information available."

Kubert admits that running the school has taken up a lot more time and energy than he had ever imagined. "I figured, with the help of the guys I recruited to teach here with me, this might require a day, two days, a week," he says, "but it became a lot more than that. I guess, in the end, that it knocked maybe 10 years off of my career, 10 years worth of work that I might have done and didn't do."

Kubert has a number of projects on the board at the moment. Tor, his "stone-age Tarzan," will reappear at some point, and Abraham Stone, a newer character that he developed for the European market, will be starring in three graphic novels from Marvel. He's bought back the rights to the Redeemer—a Kubert creation for DC from a decade ago which never saw the light of day—and says he expects to finish and publish it one of these day as well. He's made a commitment to publisher Sergio Bonelli, in Milan, to do a graphic novel called *Tex*, based on a western strip created by the publisher's father. And, most important to him, he's working on a 10-volume graphic novel entitled *Fax from Sarajevo*, based upon the true life experiences of publisher Ervin Rustamagic, who faxed Kubert on a daily basis from the region formerly known as Yugoslavia.

"I'm very lucky," he says, "I can be very selective now. I can do exactly what I want to do."

Fortunately for the comics world, professionals and fans alike, one of the things Joe Kubert has decided that he most wants to do is take what he has learned and pass it on. ☆

Jack Curtin is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, Pa.

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For the winner's name, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Mask Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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Mask Contest

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scene

by Lea Hernandez

it's manga month!

Manga Month is upon us, so what better time for *Wizard* to launch its new column on manga and anime. Many of you may be familiar with manga and anime, the growing craze devoted to Japanese comics and animation. This column will be for both the informed manga fan and to introduce prospective fans to the latest rage. You can consider this column Anime and Manga 101, a lesson in Japanese animation and comics.

Any good article written about anime/manga mentions the incredible variety of stories and subject matter. There's not really a market here (yet) for a regular series about succeeding as a car salesman, but we are seeing a strong variety of topics. Even with the sad absence of fishing comics, there's still something in the market for every taste, whether it's romance, action, science fiction, fantasy, comedy, or adult.

I'll be focusing almost exclusively on translated material available here in the U.S., including comics based on or inspired by animation and stories that originated in Japan. While we won't touch on comics available strictly in Japan, there are some things happening in Japan that are just too cool not to mention: fanzine conventions with more attendees than the San Diego Comic Con, "garage kit" (model kit) conventions, and interviews with manga and anime writers and artists.

Dark Horse Comics is riding the wave, dubbing March "Manga Month." The showpiece of "Manga Month" has got to be, hands down, *Ghost in the Shell*. It is, in fact, so insanely swell, that it's the first regular Manga Pick of the Month (see sidebar).

This spring marks the release of two new stories by Katsuhiro Otomo, the creator of *Akira*. First is *Domu* (above), then *The Legend of Mother Sarah* (left).

As if the release of *Ghost in the Shell* weren't enough, Dark Horse is also releasing Katsuhiro Otomo's *Domu: A Child's Dreams*. Otomo is the creator of the wildly popular cyberpunk *Akira*. *Domu* will appeal to Otomo fans, *Akira* fans, and even horror fans. Kind of in keeping with Dark Horse's goal of broad market appeal, isn't it? *Domu*, at Otomo's request, will be released in three volumes of 80-88 pages each.

Other Dark Horse manga titles include *Caravan Kidd*, *Rebel Sword*, and one of the biggest hits, *Oh My Goddess!* Since the first issue of the original six-part series came out in the U.S. last August, *OMG!* has toppled *Ranma 1/2* as America's most popular manga.

The first six-issue run of *Oh My Goddess!* skipped parts of the original manga to make the series a companion to the AnimEigo videos. The first U.S. run was a compilation from volumes one and two of the Japanese version. Part 2 will begin with stories from the original volume 3, and will continue "as long as you buy it," says Toren Smith of Studio

DOMU and THE LEGEND OF MOTHER SARAH © 1995 Katsuhiro Otomo and Kodansha, Ltd. English translation © Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics. All Rights Reserved.

Proteus, the company that produces the English version of the book in association with Dark Horse. The success of *Oh My Goddess!* has proven to comic readers at large what some of us have known ever since the book's heroine Belldandy first started stealing hearts in Japan: this comic is a charmer.

The first run of *Oh My Goddess!* was a huge success, the sequel promises more of the same. This is the cover art from *Oh My Goddess! Part 2* #6.

One of the oldest manga releases in America, Johji Manabe's *Outlanders*, appears as a collection in March. *Outlanders* volume 4 compiles issues #13-#16. Apparently, readers can't get enough of feisty Princess Kahm, as previous collections are hard to find.

Still another gem this month is the collected *3x3 Eyes*! Originally published by the now-defunct Innovation, the return of *3x3 Eyes* has been anticipated by fans for over three years. *3x3 Eyes* is the story of an immortal woman, Pai, and her quest for an artifact that could make her human. Her companion is Yakumo, a young man with easily the weirdest after-school job ever. Fans' requests to Dark Horse helped bring this collection about, and fan response could keep it going as a regular series. The collection also has an introduction and drawings by Rob Zombie, of the musical group White Zombie.

If all that weren't enough, the distribution company Tara Releasing has issued theatrical dates for the Manga Entertainment dub of *Wings of Honneamise*. *Wings* is a real treat, a surprisingly moving story of the first space shot on an alien world. It explores the matu-

Shirow's Ghost in the Shell.

Interview: Masamune Shirow

(Editor's Note: The following interview with Masamune Shirow was conducted in writing, with translation provided by Frederick Schodt. Special thanks to Studio Proteus's Toren Smith for coordinating the interview.)

Wizard: I'm sure the first thing your fans want to know is what your future plans are for your various characters, such as Deunan and Briareos (from *Appleseed*), Major Kusanagi (from *Ghost in the Shell*), and if there's going to be any more *Orion*?

Shirow: After the four volumes of Appleseed were completed, I did create one 48-page episode, and the 88 pages serialized in the magazine, Gaia, but since Gaia isn't being published now, I've put the story on hold. Deunan, Briareos, Hitomi, Yoshitsune, etc., are the same as ever; Artemis has disappeared somewhere around Tartarus.

As far as Ghost in the Shell is concerned, after doing "Ghost Coast," I've serialized two episodes (82 pages) in Young Magazine and am continuing the story there this year, in 1995. Major Kusanagi has changed both her name and her prosthetic body, and currently finds herself in a rather complicated situation. Young Togusa has finally gotten used to his work, and is now in a position where he can lord it over to a newcomer named Azuma. Batou seems—How shall we put it?—a little out of control. In the fall of 1995 the Ghost in the Shell theatrical feature will be completed, and it should be possible to see it in the United States as well as Japan. Since

(continued on page 48, move it!)

GHOST IN THE SHELL © 1991 Masamune Shirow. English translation © 1995 Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics. All Rights Reserved. OH MY GODDESS! ™ & © 1994 Kosuke Fujishima. English translation © 1994 Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics. All Rights Reserved.

Fans have waited years for the collected stories of Pai and Yakumo in *3x3 Eyes*.

ration of a pilot, Shiro, as he trains to fly a space capsule while dealing with the real world at the same time. *Wings* plays the Academy in Honolulu March 16-19.

That's it for now. But to make this column a successful one, we need input from readers and comic book representatives alike. To get in contact with me or just to tell me what your favorite title is, write me care of *Wizard* or e-mail me at akiyama@cris.com. ☆

Lea Hernandez has lettered and retouched manga for 10 years and serves as moderator of Japanese animation and manga for the online service Genie.

the same staff that worked on Patlabor 2 (forgive me if you've never heard of this), are enthusiastically working on it, it should be a high quality production.

As far as a sequel to *Orion* is concerned, I've done an outline with a completely new cast of characters set several hundred years later, but I have no plans to produce it until 1997, at the earliest. Anyone interested in making a movie out of *Orion*?

Wizard: The question of who owns and controls artificial beings (such as Artemis in *Appleseed* and the androids in *Ghost in the Shell*) is a common theme in your stories. Why do you write about this?

Shirow: I write about this because I'm interested in it. Actually, the only unowned, uncontrolled artificial being is the "Puppeteer" in Ghost in the Shell.

Wizard: Many of your designs are based on insects. Aside from the obvious advantage of starting with a blueprint that has a built-in design logic, why insects?

Shirow: It's because I think insects are interesting. Recently I've hardly drawn any insect-mecha.

Wizard: Who or what was (or is) your biggest non-comics influence on your work?

Shirow: Hollywood films, MTV, satellite broadcasts, (Sergio) Leone's (film) work, etc., etc.

Wizard: When you're on a tight deadline, what sort of "junk food" do you eat?

Shirow: My gray matter isn't junk because I eat junk food. I'm chronically busy, but I try to work without tight deadlines and I do my best to make sure I eat and sleep properly.

—Lea Hernandez

sneak preview:

The Dirty Pair: Fatal but not Serious

On July 18, the Lovely Angels return, and in color. For five monthly issues Adam Warren writes and pencils and Karl Story inks the newest Dirty Pair adventure. Adam has already taken on fluffy journalism, karaoke, and techno-deviates. This time, Adam seems to be drawing on years of terrifying personal experiences for Kei and Yuri's latest caper. Up to this point, you might've thought Kei and Yuri had seen it all: sex-crazed robots, explosive decompression, and elf-princess computer simulations. But they've never faced any pop icon's "best friend" and worst enemy—the fans.

Kei and Yuri attend a Dirty Pair convention as guests, but hi-tech crooks plan to discredit them there as the perfect revenge. Fatal also sees the return of A Plague of Angels' journalist Cory Emerson, who now hosts her own talk show.

Adam's art has continuously improved throughout his career. His writing, for readers willing to pay attention, is blackly comic and dense with not only pop-culture references, but hard snaps as well. The designs from Fatal show that he plans to continue to do so.

picks of the month

manga:

Ghost in the Shell (shown at left)

(Dark Horse/Studio Proteus)

The only thing, in my book, that could knock a Masamune Shirow comic out of contention for Pick of the Month would be another Masamune Shirow comic.

Unlike *Appleseed*, where the battleground was very much physical, the action in *Ghost in the Shell* takes place in a zone of the mind. It also expands on Shirow's question of the ethics of owning a creature made in a laboratory, as seen through the eyes of anti-heroine Major Kusanagi.

Ghost in the Shell will be a treat for fans, because it's the first time that a manga that was originally presented in color and b&w will be reprinted that way. *GITS* is gorgeously drawn (and painted), but is also brutal, shocking, and heartbreaking. *GITS* is 48 pages, no ads, for $3.95.

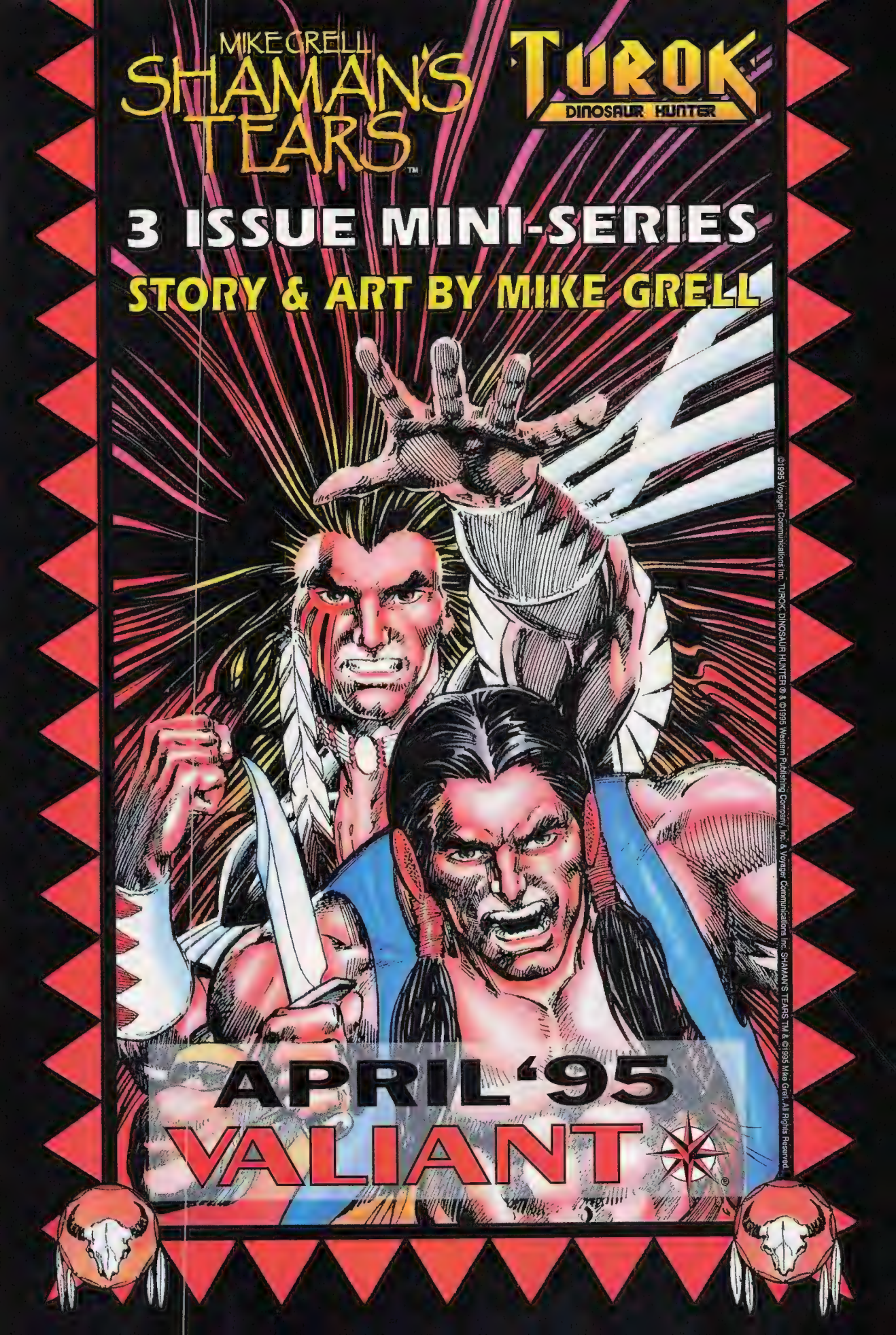
video:

Plastic Little

(A.D. Visions)

OK, it's not recent, having premiered at Anime Expo last summer. It's not politically correct: the heroine traps creatures and sells them to collectors. It's actually a ridiculous mish mash of every goofy anime plot element from the last 10 years or so: shower scenes, orphans, a scientist's daughter, mad plots to destroy the world with bad science, a spunky teen pilot, and a villain with great big...shoulder pads. It's designed and animated so well you'll weep because the story is so silly. It's just good dumb fun.

3X3 EYES ™ & © 1994 Yuzo Takada. English translation © 1995 Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics. All Rights Reserved.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Big

quake

Superstar Bart Sears leads the Birthquake charge with his return to *X-O Manowar*.

Acclaim Comics's Valiant imprint gains a major facelift with an influx of high-profile talent and new marketing strategies. By Jack Curtin

"There were times when I felt like a college basketball coach, traveling around the country recruiting the hottest prospects I could find. There were people we wanted and, it turned out, people who wanted us. In the end, we had a tremendous batting average and got most of the people on our list."

Steve Massarsky, president and publisher of Acclaim Comics, has slipped smoothly from hilarious behind-the-scenes stories from his days as rock 'n' roll manager for the Allman Brothers Band to recounting his recent adventures while setting up a massive influx of new talent into his revitalized comic company. Frankly, it's hard to tell which gives him more pleasure. Across from Massarsky's desk at Acclaim Comics's New York City headquarters, Bob Layton, editor-in-chief of the line, is equally invigorated and proving yet again that he will never be a candidate for the least enthusiastic man in comics.

"Hey," he almost shouts, "this is so exciting, I just might come out of retirement and do a three-issue *Archer & Armstrong* or something like that."

Senior vice-president Jon Hartz leans forward in his chair, eager for a break in the conversation so that he can add his own spin to things. Next to him, executive editor Tony Bedard sits quietly, pen posed over a clipboard as if contemplating what he will say when and if he gets a chance.

These four sitting in Massarsky's tidy corner office are the primary architects of what the new/old company has chosen to unveil in March as "Birthquake," an awkward appellation for what is arguably a unique event in comics history. With an infusion of money and energy from video game monarch Acclaim Entertainment Inc.—which acquired Valiant's parent company, Voyager Communications, last spring and is now changing the corporate name to reflect that—a publishing line-up that is simultaneously compressing and expanding, and the arrival of some of the most respected names in the industry, Acclaim Comics appears to have shaken off the doldrums which had some observers questioning the company's survival as recently as six months ago, and re-asserted itself as a potential major player in an industry currently in flux.

Under the new structure, Valiant Comics will continue to be the imprint for Acclaim's ongoing but smaller line of superhero titles, while two new imprints, Windjammer and Armada, will feature creator-owned and licensed properties, respectively (see sidebars). The Valiant line will add such popular creators as Dan Jurgens, Bart Sears, Norm Breyfogle, Paul Gulacy, Jackson Guice, and Ron Marz to its talent pool already consisting of veterans Bob Hall and John Ostrander, as well as young upstarts such as Rags Morales, Bernard Chang, and Sean Chen.

"We took some time to take a look at ourselves and at the industry," says Massarsky. "We studied our sales charts for the last three years. We talked to something like 200 retailers and 500 fans and found out what they liked and what they didn't, what the problems were."

TUROK ™ & © Western Publishing. All other artwork and characters ™ & © 1995 Voyager Communications Inc.

Norm Breyfogle becomes a penciler on *Bloodshot* (right). Paul Culacy picks up the chores on *Eternal Warrior* (inset).

What their survey of the current state of the market told them, says Hartz, was clear. "Fans said there were too many titles out there," he claims, "too many duplications. Because [of this], it was harder and harder for readers to keep track of continuity, to remember from one month to the next what had happened in the previous issue. Specifically, they said they like a lot of the stories we were doing in our titles, but that they felt Valiant had a 'house style' that really wasn't very exciting. They wanted more excitement in our books."

The answer to that and other complaints—including the problem that readers felt they had to buy several Valiant books to understand one—the Valiant brain trust decided, was first of all to recruit the big-name talent, and then to cut down on the clutter in the marketplace by reducing their published titles by half and to double the frequency of most of the remaining books.

In March, Valiant's *Bloodshot, Eternal Warrior, Magnus: Robot Fighter, Ninjak, Timewalker, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, The Visitor,* and *X-O Manowar* will begin a twice-monthly publishing schedule, while *Solar: Man of the Atom* and *Shadowman* will continue their current monthly schedules. Gone, by the end of the month, will be *Armorines, Geomancer, Harbinger, H.A.R.D. Corps, Psi-Lords, Rai, The Second Life of Dr. Mirage,* and *Secret Weapons.* Most of these characters and any unresolved storylines will turn up in one or more of the ongoing titles. The Secret Weapons team will appear in *Bloodshot* and *Ninjak*, Dr. Mirage will move to *Shadowman*, the Armorines will be in *X-O*, Geomancer in *Eternal Warrior*, Rai and the Psi-Lords in *Magnus*, and H.A.R.D. Corps and the Harbinger folks will be seen in *The Visitor*.

The semi-monthly publishing schedules were inspired by one of the competition's most popular titles, Hartz says. "There has never been a point when there were this many titles out [in the market], something like 800 of them, and it's hard to keep track of everything. One of the [sets of books that are] easy to follow, though, are the four Superman titles, because that is essentially a weekly comic book." Hartz says the company will be shooting for the same effect with the new schedule, giving readers two opportunities per month to find new issues of their favorite titles.

To accommodate the speeded-up schedule, there will be two pencilers on each of the semi-monthly titles, alternating on story arcs. "This plays right to the strength of the artists," argues Bedard. "By doing a complete story arc, each one gets to tell the story from beginning to end, and to pace things in the best possible manner. This allows them the time and the opportunity to push things to the limit, to do the very best job they could do."

A mid-November two-day conference in New York City was the first official Birthquake event (the name comes from the fact that Valiant will be four years old in March and from a desire "to shake things up in the industry"), with most of the creative teams gathering with Valiant editors and top management of Acclaim Entertainment to set an agenda for the future. "I know everybody was impressed that Acclaim [Entertainment] had all its top people there to show support for us," says Layton, "but then when it became clear that [Acclaim's] message was that our only mandate was to provide high-quality work, everybody was just stunned. I don't think that ever before, in the history of this industry, a corporation has told a roomful of artists that its primary goal was quality, then sales."

Considering the number of new, top-name artists joining Acclaim, the obvious comparison is with Image Comics, formed when a whole phalanx of top-name artists left Marvel Comics *en masse* to create their new imprint and change the face of the industry. Massarsky doesn't shy away from the comparison, but chooses to define what's happening in different terms. "This is the largest influx of creative talent into one existing company at one time in the industry's history," he notes, "and it was intended that way."

"What I like more than anything else is that we are going out aggressively to challenge a difficult market," Layton says. "We are actively pursuing the market, rather than just fortifying our-

selves against it like everybody else seems to be doing. I gotta tell you, I'm pumped."

It should be stressed that Birthquake is not an "event," not a crossover or multi-title story, but rather a publishing concept. Each March title will stand alone, and no reader will have to buy any of the others to understand what is happening in their favorite book. For that matter, all the pieces won't even be fully in place until summer.

Solar: Man of the Atom

Dan Jurgens was clearly one of the creators Valiant most wanted on board and one of the first approached to sign up. He says it was definitely the right time, coming off of writing and penciling DC's *Zero Hour* re-launch.

Jurgens will be writing and drawing five issues of *Solar*, beginning with #46, with industry vet Dick Giordano inking. The first three of these will be monthly, the last two semi-monthly. His first story arc will shake up the title significantly. "You have to remember that Phil Seleski [a.k.a. Solar] has this mammoth guilt he carries around because he once created a black hole that killed millions of people," Jurgens says. "Well, it turns out that he has gone back in time and taken a planet very much like Earth and guided it and molded it until it becomes another Earth." Solar, having read comics as a kid, will fill this Earth with other superbeings.

Jurgens will continue to write the title for some indeterminate time after issue #50, with new, not-yet-selected teams taking over the art chores as the title maintains a semi-monthly schedule thereafter.

Bloodshot

The prolific Kevin VanHook remains the scripter of *Bloodshot* and artist Norm Breyfogle debuts with a two-issue story arc, which is about a powerful killer from the future who has come back to 1995 to destroy nanite-powered lifeforms. "To be honest, I wasn't familiar with the character at all," notes Breyfogle, "and I'd never done this sort of character, a 'big gun' guy before. I'm enjoying it a lot and filling in a gap in my artistic experience at the same time." Breyfogle is committed to a second story arc on the character, to appear in May, and then will be joining writer Jesse Berdinka to develop a new series featuring "a lot of monstrous characters."

Sean Chen, the other artist currently on the title, admits that he was looking to do a "heavy action book" after his year-long stint on *Harbinger*, and *Bloodshot* was just the ticket. "I was really happy they gave me the title," he says, "and I'm really looking forward to working with Norm. We got to talk together at the meeting last November and found we had a lot in common."

Later in the year, according to VanHook, readers will see "some of the ramifications of the 'Bloodshot Rampage' storyline that just finished and a flashback story or two which shows some unrevealed events during the Rampage," which had Bloodshot become a cold killing machine. "There will also be some new villains introduced, and the nanites in Bloodshot's bloodstream are still trying to continue the rampage directives so that they will be trying to build a second version of Bloodshot, a body of their own." VanHook notes that these nanites aren't sentient beings; they're just geared to complete Bloodshot's programming as an invulnerable killer, and in order to carry out this task—which was foiled by Ninjak's group in the "Rampage" storyline—they're forming a new Bloodshot inside the original one. After Bloodshot finds himself frequently blacking out and getting sick, the second Bloodshot will emerge from the circle on the hero's chest. This will leave "our" Bloodshot very weak, and readers extremely excited.

Eternal Warrior

John Ostrander says that, in effect, the more things change with *Eternal Warrior*, the more they'll stay the same. "My approach is always to give readers more of what they like," the book's scripter says, "so if we're publishing twice a month, I'll give them twice as much. What attracted me to Gilad from the start was his longevity, the fact that he's lived for millennia. I mean, when you say, 'Been there, done that,' you're pretty much summing up the character."

Paul Gulacy's first work on the title (he's scheduled to do at least one story arc before jumping over to *Turok*) is the March cover. Artist Jackson Guice will come on board in May, after leaving his long-standing stint of *Action Comics* as of issue #711, and is just plain excited about it. "*Eternal Warrior* is the book I've been waiting for," he enthuses. "I've wanted to work on something where the hero doesn't wear a cape.

"What I want to do is establish the predatory aspect of the character visually," Guice continues. "He has to have a 'look' that identifies him as a warrior, as a very mean individual when he gets angry."

Mike Manley's take on Ninjak.

Magnus: Robot Fighter

Editor Bedard will continue writing *Magnus* for the next few months, with an art team of George Seravia (currently on the title) and Kevin Kobasic (moving over from the canceled *Rai*). "The story of the Valiant Universe in the future will now be told in *Magnus*," Bedard says, "since Rai and the Psi-Lords are being folded into our book. Issue #49 and #50 in March will reintroduce the freewill robots into the story and bring the focus back to Magnus as the star of the book, as well as tying up a lot of the plots that have been running since the end of the Malev War in *Rai and the Future Force* #22.

"Magnus is the title character, after all, and one of the founding characters of the Valiant Universe. Because we wanted to get away from just one robot-crunching story after another, we jumped ahead 20 years after the end of the war, but it's time now to get back to our roots."

Bedard will leave the title in June, and Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, current writers on *Ninjak*, will take over. However, Bedard will be writing a major, six-part *Mothergod* miniseries due out in June, in which the villainous Erica Pierce is freed from her cincture wormhole, and tries to cope with the changes that have occurred in the outside world since Solar trapped her in it. This series will focus on several current Acclaim characters, including

everyone from the future Magnus universe, who face Erica in a battle that changes the layout of the entire Acclaim universe. "This will not be *Unity 2*," Bedard clarifies. "Readers are pretty worn out from that." The penciler and inker are as yet undetermined for this series, which Bedard says will be either bi-weekly or weekly.

Ninjak

When Jorge González comes over from *Armorines* and *X-O* to take on Valiant's martial arts-trained espionage agent this summer, he says, "We'll be trying to give *Ninjak* its own little world with a strong supporting cast and a rogue's gallery of villains so that new readers can come in and figure out what's going on, and older readers will find more depth to the stories. I have several ideas, including a female lead character who I'll be introducing soon." Prior to that, Abnett and Lanning will be closing out their run on the book. Bart Sears does the March covers.

Artist Andrew Currie continues as one-half of the art team under the new schedule. Mike Manley, fresh from his tenure on *Batman*, is the other member of the team. "I like this twice-monthly concept," he says, "because it gives you some breathing space on a regular basis. It's tough to stay charged up month after month on a title, especially if you're doing more than one book."

Shadowman

"The Acclaim people said they liked the book and wanted me to keep doing it," says Bob Hall, who writes and pencils *Shadowman*, explaining why the book will remain on a monthly schedule, "which was very nice, of course. We'll be focusing more on Jack Boniface's adventures in New Orleans for the next several months, maybe making it easier for folks who aren't well-acquainted with the book to jump on board.

"One storyline that I think will intrigue a lot of people, because it's different from anything else I've seen, is about a crook who is captured by Shadowman suing him for injuries. He has to try and prove that Jack is Shadowman in order to win his case, which should be fun in itself, plus the story allows me the opportunity to bring back a lot of old characters to testify. And Master Darque will eventually return, which will be an event in and of itself." Tom Ryder is slated to be this book's regular inker.

Timewalker

The immortal, time-leaping Ivar will have no regular writer or artists, says new editor Julie Crimmins. *Timewalker* will now feature stories by a variety of writers. In March, for example, Van-

Rags Morales continues as *Turok* artist (above), while Bob Hall deals out *Shadowman* (right).

Hook wraps up a three-part story about the Harbinger Wars, with art by Anthony Castrillo and Gonzalo Mayo. Hall does a single-issue story with artist Susan Wright, which leads directly into *Timewalker* #0 in April.

"My background is in science fiction," says Crimmins, "so I hope to get several SF writers to do stories for us, since the time travel concept lends itself to that sort of approach. I already have in hand a great story by Debra Doyle and James MacDonald, who do the 'Mageworld' series for Tor Books, which has all sorts of time paradoxes and tongue-in-cheek humor in it. I can promise everybody, as well, that Bob Hall will eventually be back to tell the long-awaited story of Ivar and Nefertiti."

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

Tim Truman is back writing and delighted to be with his old collaborator Rags Morales and long-wished-for collaborator Paul Gulacy on *Turok*. "To tell you the truth, I was disappointed my first time on the book when they told me the Lost Land had been destroyed," Truman says, "and now that they've brought it back, we're gonna have some fun.

"They gave me back Rags on the book to entice me to come back because they know that I like working with him. He's so conscientious about details and works to get a lot of authentic Native American regalia into the book," Truman says. While he's never worked with Gulacy before, Truman says that they have both wanted to get together on a project and he's looking forward to "playing up to Paul's cinematic style, to allow him to do the sort of great stuff he did in [Marvel's] *Master of Kung-Fu* back in the '70s."

In the March story arc, Truman and Morales tell the story of the struggle against an overlord from the future who wants to control all of the Lost Land and is bent on crushing the opposition of Turok and his allies.

The Visitor

The primary effect of the new publishing schedule on Valiant's newest title *The Visitor*, says writer VanHook, is that he will have to stretch out his story a bit. "I want to keep things going for about six months before I reveal who the Visitor is," he says, "which means it will be somewhere around issue #10 or #12, instead of issue #6, as I had originally planned. Not that we don't have plenty of story to tell, because we'll be revealing the identity of the Harbinger first."

Issues #4 and #5 in March recount the Visitor's struggle with a group of criminal special effects experts in Los Angeles, while his reputation suffers as a result of poor reporting. The Harbinger returns in issue #5.

Bernard Chang, who stays on as the title's penciler—alternating with John Ross—says he's excited that he's getting to "work alongside guys like Dan Jurgens and Bart Sears and Jackson Guice," and pleased with the chance to do a more action-oriented title like *The Visitor*. He even argues that the next evolution at Valiant is already well under way, and began

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BART IS BACK!
X-O
MANOWAR
IN MARCH
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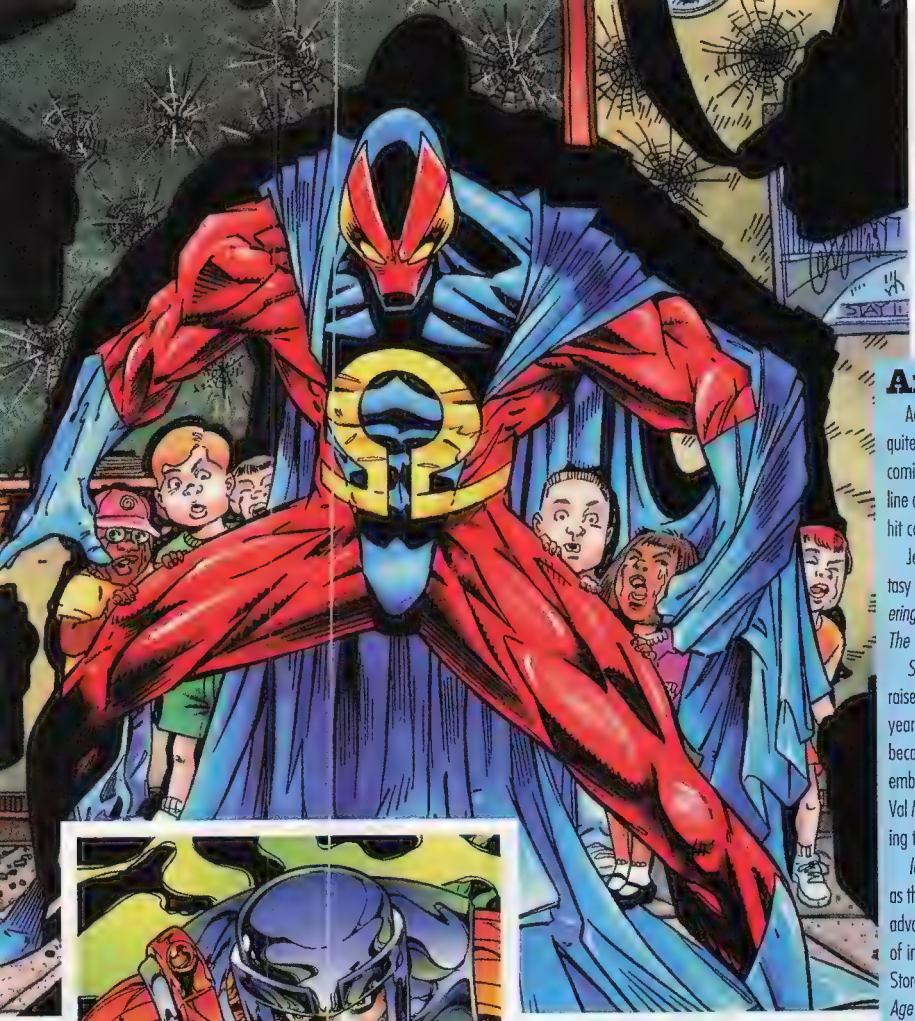
Voyager Communications Inc.



Bernard Chang remains on *The Visitor* (above), while Andy Smith (left) shares chores on *X-O* with Sears.

with *The Visitor* #1, which was the first computer-colored book published by the company.

X-O Manowar

Writer Ron Marz says the opportunity to work with Bart Sears and Andy Smith would have brought him running to *X-O* even if he hadn't already left Marvel's *Silver Surfer* as of issue #102 (an issue which he plotted but did not script; he remains the writer on DC's *Green Lantern* and Image's *StormWatch*). "I've worked with both of them before, and each does the kind of art I like to write for," he says. "We'll be turning the book into more of a straight superhero title, plus getting back to the idea that he is a man out of time and place."

Sears, who returns to the title after a brief stint on issues #14 and #15 in 1993, comes back refreshed and eager. "X-O is one of the most interesting characters in comics," he says. "Past, present, and future come together in Aric, a Visigoth warrior with a futuristic suit of armor trying to make sense of the present day." He does the first story arc in March, which opens with Aric awakening in a Roman prison in the year 409 A.D., the victim of a powerful new villain.

Sears's artistic partner, Andy Smith, has recently finished a four-issue mini-series, *Deadly Duo*, for Image and says that X-O, along with the rest of the Valiant characters, "are very appealing to me visually. I think they're great for the kind of storytelling I want to do—dynamic action-adventure."

With all that creator enthusiasm fueling the fires, the Acclaim Comics folks are convinced they're moving in the right direction. "We have shown that we're a company that's not afraid to re-examine ourselves and the way we do business and to respond to the market in a positive way," says Massarsky. "There's a mountain out there that we have to climb if we're going to try and turn around, not only this company, but the whole industry. We think we now have the people in place to do just that." ☆

Jack Curtin is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, Pa.

Armada

Acclaim Comics's newest imprint, Armada, launches to quite a bit of anticipation in March, aiming to become the full comic force its title implies. Christening this licensed product line are two new mini-series based on Wizards of the Coast's hit collectible card game, *Magic: The Gathering*.

Jeff Gómez, a Valiant editor for the past year and a fantasy enthusiast, will write both four-issue titles: *Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage* and *Ice Age on the World of Magic: The Gathering*.

Shadow Mage tells the story of Jared Carthalion, an orphan raised to avenge the death of his murdered father; over the years, the young spellcaster, named the "Shadow Mage" because of his gaunt complexion and obsession with fire, embarks on a journey of vengeance which consumes his life. Val Mayerik (Malibu's *Bruce Lee*) is both illustrating and painting the covers for all four issues.

Ice Age, on the other hand, relates a 2,000-year-long epic as the last remnants of civilization struggle against the frozen advance of a gigantic glacier, coupled with a cosmic disaster of interstellar proportions. From the fate of the great city of Storgard to the furious duels of the god-like Planeswalkers, *Ice Age* will feature art by Rafael Kayanan (Marvel's *Conan the Adventurer*) and painted covers by Charles Vess.

For the *Magic: The Gathering* players, the first two issues of *Shadow Mage* will contain cards from an existing set. As an even cooler bonus, *Ice Age* will have cards from the May-scheduled *Ice Age* expansion set, one in each issue.

—Michael Searle

Windjammer

Acclaim Comics's new imprint for creator-owned works, Windjammer, debuted in February with the release of two Mike Grell titles, one new and one a revised version of a previously published title.

Bar Sinister is a super-team book written by Grell and penciled by Rick Hoberg. In yet another sign of the changing nature of the comics business, this ongoing monthly title is a spin-off of Grell's *Shaman's Tears*, published by another company, Image Comics. *Starslayer—The Director's Cut* is an eight-issue, semi-monthly mini-series which reprints rewritten and reformatted material from the six-issue *Starslayer* title published by Pacific Comics in 1982. Bookend issues #1 and #8 consist of new stories by Grell and art by S. Clarke Hawbaker.

Neal Adams will become the second creator to publish under the Windjammer imprint in May, with *Knighthawk* (a six-issue semi-monthly series) and *Valeria the She-Bat* (a two-issue semi-monthly). A five-issue *Samuree* monthly series is also in the works for sometime in '95.

Grell is slated to do a third Windjammer title, and creators Dan Jurgens, Paul Gulacy, and Norm Breyfogle say they may want to pitch some ideas at the editors sometime down the road.

—Jack Curtin

Take This Lady Home!

ENTRIES DUE BY APRIL 28, 1995!

Lady Death Contest

NAME

HOME ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE DATE OF BIRTH

Hey, how'd you like to take Lady Death home with you? Yeah? Well, your buddies at Chaos! Comics and Wizard Press have teamed up to give you the chance to win the li'l lady herself, along with some other pretty keen stuff. Here's the full scoop...

Grand Prize (One winner)

One lucky dog will reap a one-of-a kind Lady Death statue sculpted by Clayburn Moore! Yup, you heard us right, *one-of-a-kind*! Y'see, this here statue is the master prototype, from which all the other Lady Death statues are made! On top of that, this bad girl is painted by Moore Creations's color designer Paul Moore! And hey, did we mention the diamond inlay and signed certificate of authenticity? *Now* yer droolin'!

Lady Death™ & © Brian Pulido. Clayburn Moore photo courtesy of Moore Creations.

Second Prize (Ten winners)

Ten fans win an 18-1/2" x 29" Lady Death chromium poster, featuring the artwork shown on page 58, signed by Steven Hughes!

WIZARD®

CHAOS! COMICS

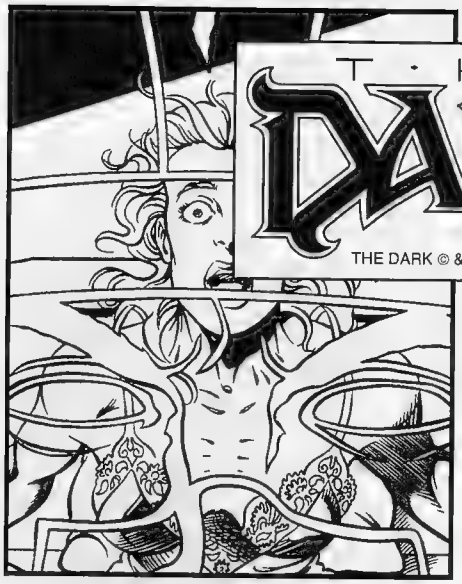
And all ya gotta do to get a chance at winning is fill out the official Lady Death coupon over there on page 58—that's *all*—and mail that sucker off to:

Lady Death Contest
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

This contest expires April 28, 1995!
So just send that entry in, already!

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Chaos! Comics, their immediate families, and those who are silicone naysayers. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, and telephone number with area code on the official entry form, a standard postcard, or a three-by-five-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Lady Death Contest, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Unless there's no gravity in Hell, Lady Death is in for some problems in a couple of years. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 28, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on *May* 1, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after *May* 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Lady Death Winners, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!



THE DARK

THE DARK © & ™ 1994 Joseph Naftali

ISSUE ONE
Coming
January 1995

••••••

40 pgs of Full Color

••••••

Joseph Naftali
Todd Lidstone
Kurt Hoff

FOODANG

FOODANG © & ™ 1994 Michael Duggan

ISSUE ONE
Coming
January 1995

••••••

38 pgs of Full Color

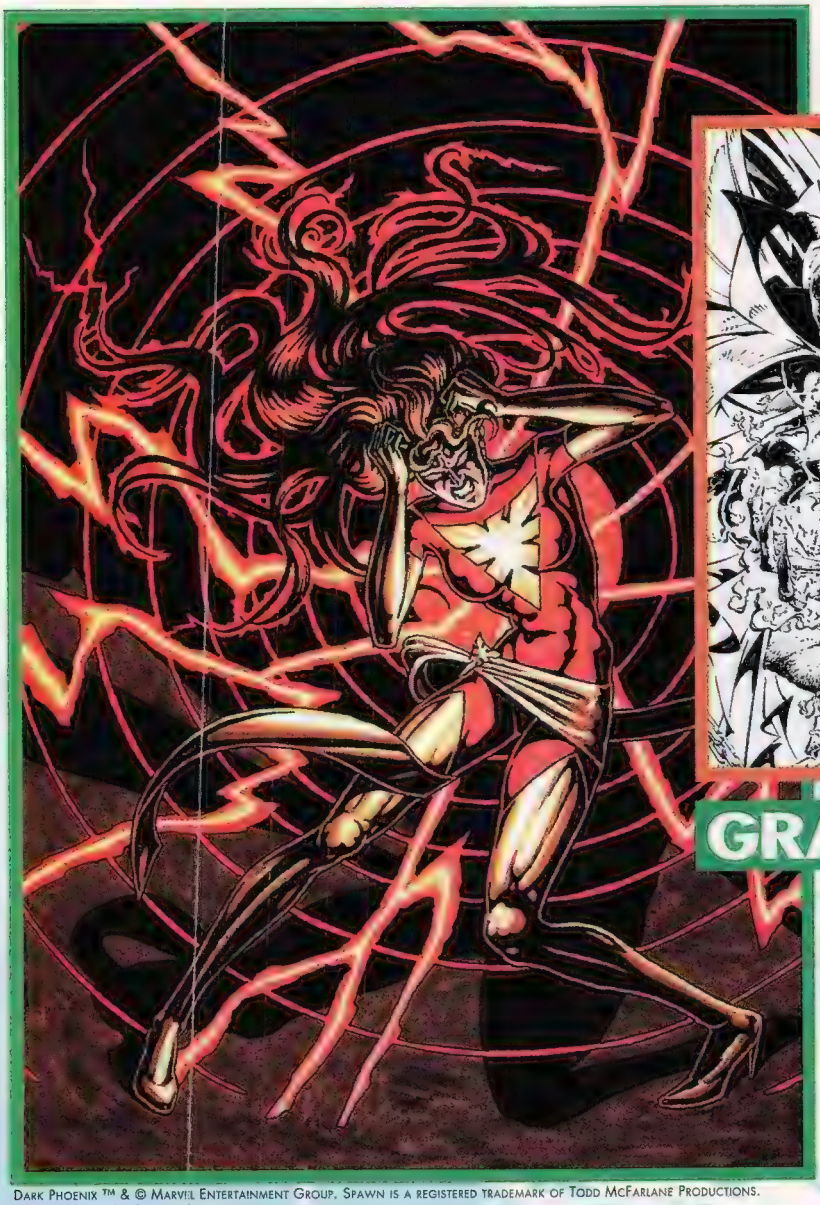
••••••

Michael Duggan
Mike Sagara

the Drawing board

The 10 people whose artwork got an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Superman/Doomsday* #1 signed by Dan Jurgens, a *Amazing Spider-Man* #389 signed by Mark Bagley, and a *Captain America* #425 (Collector's Edition) signed by Mark Gruenwald and Dave Hoover. The four runners-up will each receive a *Supreme* #12 signed by Stephen Platt, a *Zero Hour* #0 signed by Dan Jurgens, and an *Aquaman* #0 signed by Peter David. The artist of the winning entry this month will receive all that stuff, *plus* an original piece of Spawn art by Greg Capullo (thanks to Greg for donating it—you're the juice)! Congrats to all!

The showcase of comic book fan art.



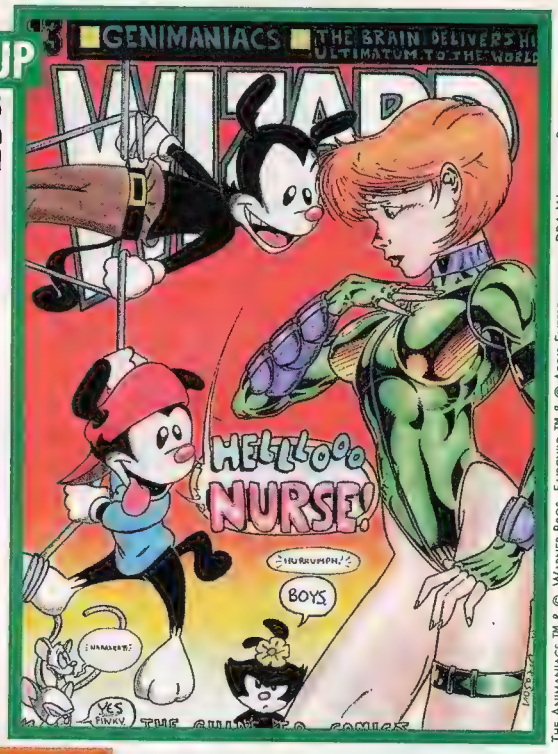
GRAND PRIZE

DARK PHOENIX
By Daniell McCleney
Houston, TX

Dark Phoenix ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Spawn is a registered trademark of Todd McFarlane Productions. Spawn © Todd McFarlane Productions.

RUNNER-UP

FAIRCHILD & THE ANIMANIACS
By Patrick Gleason
Forest Lake, MN



The Animaniacs ™ & © Warner Bros. Fairchild ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA Wildstorm Productions.

The Crow ™ & © Crow Vision Inc. & Miramax Films

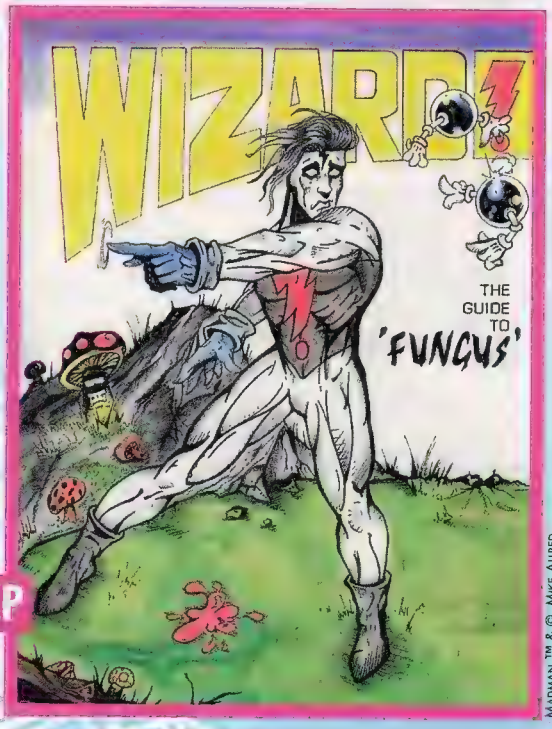
RUNNER-UP

THE CROW
By Bill Ragan
Tanlequah, OK

Sludge ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc.

RUNNER-UP

SLUDGE
By Kevin Spurlock
McAlester, OK



Madman ™ & © Mike Allred

RUNNER-UP

MADMAN
By Shaun Jennings
Norfolk, England

BLOODSHOT
By Bill Thomson
Bristol, CT

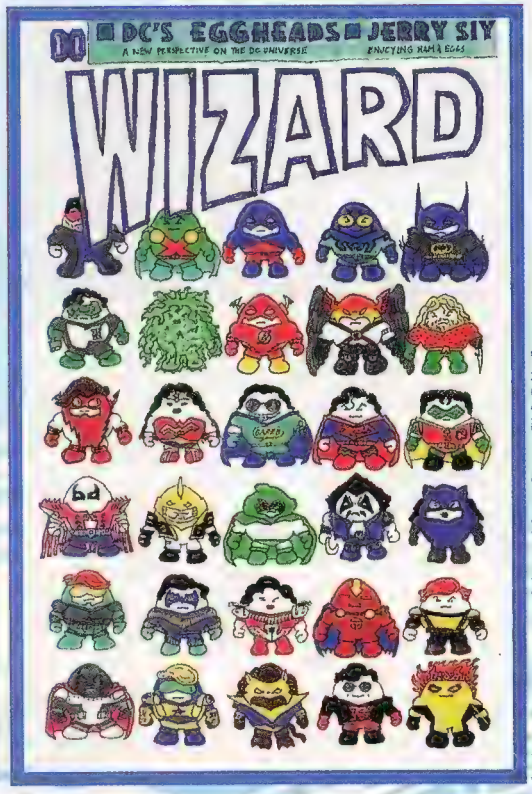
Bloodshot ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

ELEKTRA
By Glenn Pollard
Judsonia, AR

Elektra ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

JUDGE DREDD
By Meong Gonzales
Kaloocan, Philippines

Judge Dredd ™ & © DC Comics & Fleetway/Quality Ltd.



DC EGGHEADS
By Jerry Siy
Manila, Philippines

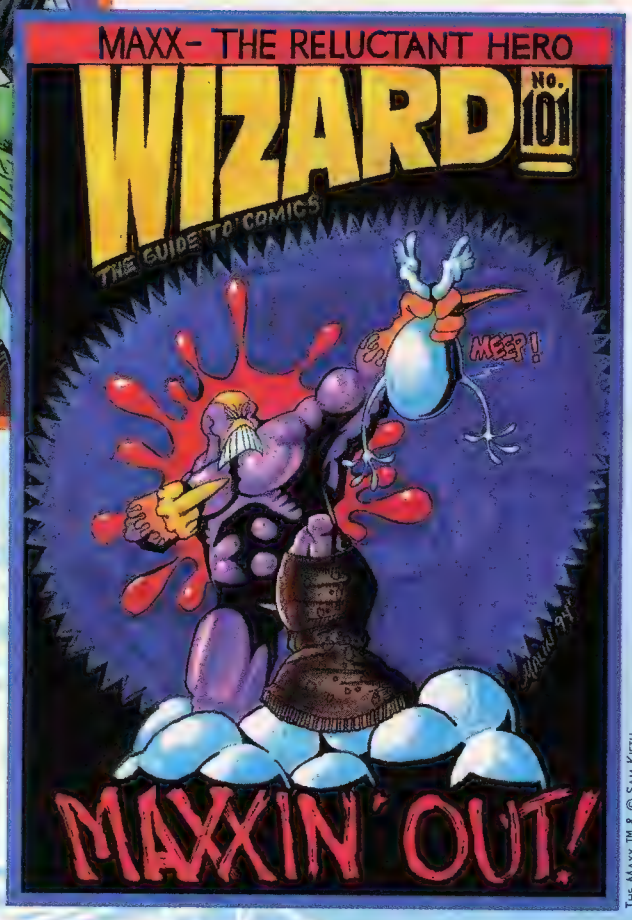
All DC Characters ™ & © DC Comics. Gareb Shamus ™ & © His Folks.

GRIFTER
By Frank Alexis Jr.
Brooklyn, NY

Grifter ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA Wildstorm Productions

LOBO vs. HULK
By David Seong
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Lobo ™ & © DC Comics. Hulk ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group



THE MAXX
By Dave Malin
Lebanon, PA

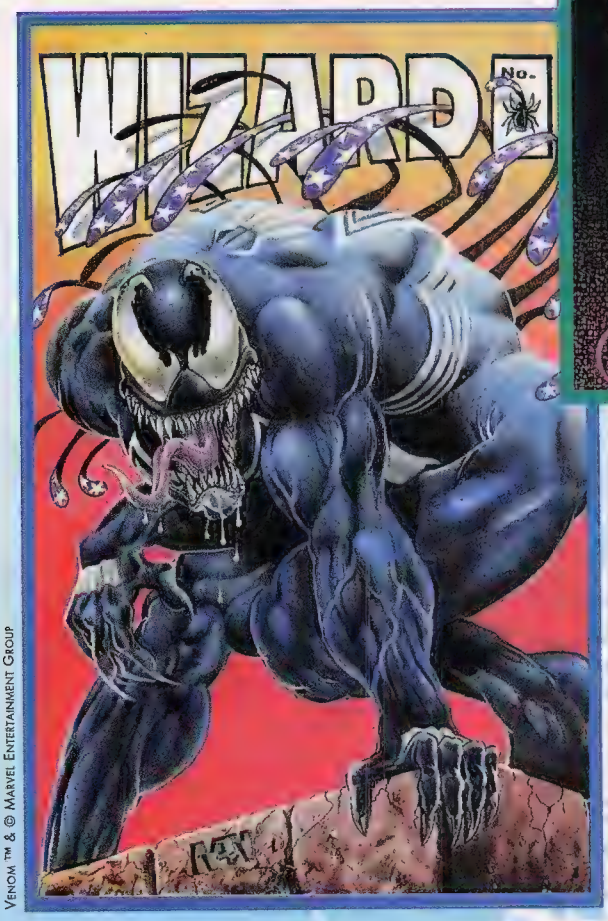
The Maxx ™ & © Sam Kieth

BLAZE AND GHOST RIDER
By Ralph Ramil M. Mendoza
Baguio City, Philippines

Blaze and Ghost Rider ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

MARSHAL LAW
By Sean McNelis
Mercerville, NJ

Marshall Law ™ & © Pat Mills & Kevin O'Neil



VENOM
By Ivan Nunes do Espirito Santo
Itu—SP—Brazil

Venom ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group

Entries for The Drawing Board should be sent to:
The Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

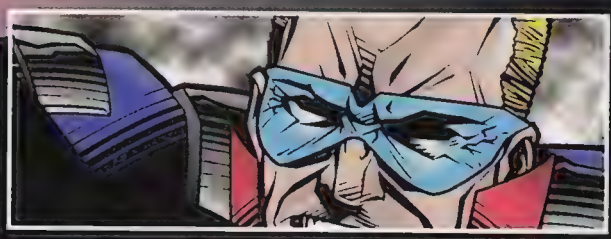
Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard, and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, line art, bloody finger, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8" x 11-1/4". Do not fold, bend, or roll artwork. Mail flat to avoid damage. Please enclose your name and full address. All entries are nonreturnable and become property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Good luck!

STORMWATCH™

Special #2

A chilling secret lurks beneath the surface of *StormWatch Prime.*

Will they survive long enough to learn it?



RON MARZ • CULLY HAMNER

Coming in May from WildStorm Productions and Image Comics.

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CUT & PRINT

Looks like the kids from Gen13 are ready for their break in Hollywood.

The comic insider's guide to Hollywood.

by MaRC ShaPiRo

JiM Lee doEs MoVies

A Gen13 animated motion picture is slated as the first project of WildStorm Pictures, the recently announced movie arm of Jim Lee's Wild Storm Productions. The Gen13 movie, budgeted at $2 million, will be directed by *Batman* and *Alf* animated series veteran Kevin Altieri and is scheduled to be a direct-to-video release in early 1996.

"The movie will be an adaptation of the comic book mini-series," reported WildStorm spokesman Jeff Mariotte. "There will be some changes, but it will be real close to a literal adaptation."

Mariotte said that the Gen13 film is already in active pre-production and that "Altieri is already busy doing storyboards." The WildStorm rep also stated that "other film projects are currently under consideration, but that there are no other projects slated for production under the WildStorm Pictures banner at this time."

"This just seems like the logical next step for WildStorm," company president Lee said. "We've thrived in other areas of the entertainment business by telling the kind of stories we enjoy, and superheroes just translate so well to animation. Everyone here at WildStorm is tremendously excited about the animated Gen13 feature, and the new opportunities it presents to the comic industry."

On another WildStorm media front, *Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s: Covert Action*, an element of CBS television's Saturday morning "Action Zone," recently completed its first season of episodes. The series is currently in reruns. According to Mariotte, "We haven't heard about a renewal yet, but we're guardedly optimistic. They have asked for a couple of changes, so we're assuming it's a go."

is CRuiSe oN tHe MaRk?

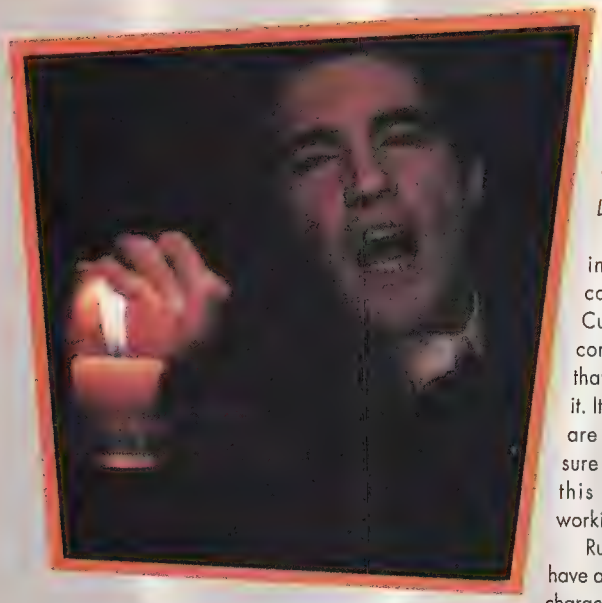
Will Extreme Studios's comic *Power of the Mark* be brought to the screen under the production eye of Tom Cruise? Here's what we know. Extreme chief Rob Liefeld has talked with Cruise's people, but there is a question of whether Cruise will be directly involved. From the folks at Extreme comes a confirmation of the meeting and the statement, "We don't really want to confirm or deny anything at this point, because things aren't finalized."

Ditto Liefeld's confab with Steven Spielberg concerning the chances of Spielberg's involvement in bringing Liefeld's *Doom's IV* comic to the screen through Amblin Entertainment. From Extreme comes the confirmation that Spielberg and Liefeld have met to discuss the project and that the director does have interest. From Amblin comes word that "We have nothing to give out on that project at this time." So there you have it.

iT's SMaSH tiMe!

The Incredible Hulk movie, a co-production between Gale Anne Hurd (*Terminator 2*, *Aliens*) and Marvel Comics, is in "active development" at Universal, according to studio spokesman Carr D'Angelo. "We have a first-draft script by John Turman that is very faithful to the comic book rather than the television series, and the people at Marvel are very happy with that." D'Angelo stated that no director, cast, or special effects particulars have been set and no start date is on the horizon. Further down the comic-to-movie pipeline is Universal's ongoing relationship with *The Green Hornet*. The initial concept for the movie has been scrapped and D'Angelo claims the project is "back to ground zero."

Gen13 ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions



Author Anne Rice is rallying for Antonio Banderas to play The Mummy.

a crow reincarnation?

According to sources at Ed Pressman Productions, an announcement of a sequel to *The Crow* may be forthcoming. There is no script, director, or casting to crow about, but, according to Pressman's people, "It hasn't been ruled out and it hasn't been decided one way or another yet." However, word out of the nest is that something could be made public in the near future.

anne rice calling

The success of the film version of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* has not been lost on Hollywood or, for that matter, Anne Rice. In various stages of development are film takes on *The Vampire Lestat*, *The Witching Hour*, and *The Mummy*. For Rice, who stuck her foot in her mouth by initially opposing Tom Cruise's casting in *Interview* before changing her mind just before the film opened, seems to have warmed to Hollywood ways and is now publicly seeking work on *Lestat*. "I would like to write the script for *The Vampire Lestat*," Rice said recently, "but I'm being told no. But I'm knocking on the door repeatedly."

In regards to the projected *The Mummy* flick, Rice is lobbying her loyal followers for a personal casting choice. Anyone ringing up Rice gets a recorded message asking, "Do you think Antonio Banderas (who made points as Armand in *Interview*) could play The Mummy?"

will russell escape?

Kurt Russell and John Carpenter have been woodshedding recently, and the result may be the long-anticipated *Escape from New York* sequel, *Escape from Los Angeles*.

"John and I are fooling around with some concepts," Russell told Cut & Print. "When we come up with something that we like, then we'll do it. It's a situation where we are not putting any pressure on ourselves to make this movie. We do miss working with each other."

Russell also claims to still have an affinity for the *Escape* character, Snake Pliskin. "He's born bad, he stays bad, he lives bad, and he'll die bad. He's bad," chuckled the actor.

faust, anyone?

Michael Burnett and Ted Chalmers have owned the film rights to Rebel Studios comic book character Faust for nearly two years. They have Stuart Gordon inked to direct, and they have a first-rate script courtesy of Faust co-creator/writer David Quinn. But, at a time when any character worth a splash page is being snatched up for the screen, Faust can't buy a deal.

"We want to be true to the comic, and that scares people," reported Burnett of the endless round of studio meetings. "*Faust* is a violent piece, and that puts a lot of people off. There has been some interest, but basically, it's going to take a certain amount of money to do this right, and so far, there has not been the right amount of money offered. But I'm sure something will eventually come together."

corman to release black scorpion

B-movie director/producer Roger Corman is jumping into the superhero business with a female crimefighter called *The Black Scorpion*. The initial entry in what will almost certainly be a franchise began filming in late January under director Jonathan Winfrey and based on a Christopher Wooden script. The film, according to a Corman spokesperson, will make its debut on the Showtime cable TV network later this year before heading to video.

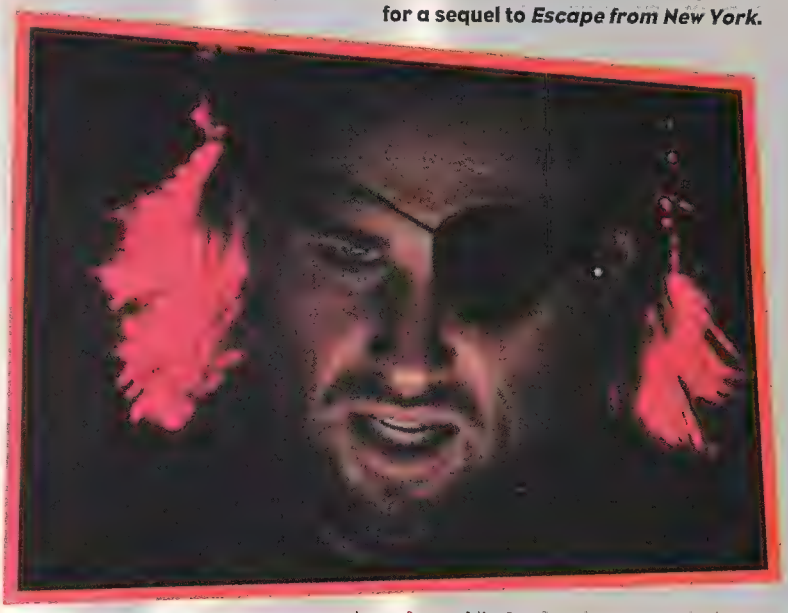
At press time, casting for *The Black Scorpion* was not available. The story centers around a by-the-book female undercover cop who, following a traumatic confrontation and the death of her father, turns into a crimefighter on neither side of the law. The Black Scorpion (whose costume includes boots and fishnet stockings) takes on an equally bigger-than-life supervillain called The Breath Taker.

According to Marcus Bastida, director of publishing for Roger Corman's Cosmic Comics, there are no immediate plans to adapt *The Black Scorpion* to the comic page.

hamill wants to die

Actor Mark Hamill (*Star Wars*) makes no bones about it. "I'm really a sucker when I don't have to audition. When somebody calls

Kurt Russell hopes to team up with John Carpenter for a sequel to *Escape from New York*.



Antonio Banderas & Kurt Russell photos courtesy of Everett Collection

me up and says, 'Will you do this?' it's pretty much a lock that I will do it." And so when director John Carpenter came calling with a small role of town minister in the *Village of the Damned* remake, Hamill agreed. The original *Village of the Damned*, a 1960 film starring George Sanders and based on the John Wyndham novel *The Midwich Cuckoos*, tells the very scary story of a group of unusual children born in a small English village who are revealed to be the vanguard of an elaborate alien invasion. The film was so scary and so successful that it spawned a 1964 sequel, *Children of the Damned*.

"I don't really know what I can say," related Hamill, "but it's safe to say that something horrible happens to me at some point."

Hamill, who is currently on display in the pioneering, large interactive CD-Rom *Wing Commander III*, and who is prepping an interactive script entitled *The Black Pearl* for possible '95 production, has died for John Carpenter once before, in the cable television movie *Body Bags*. He claimed he would croak for Carpenter any time. "I told John, 'Maybe I could become your Hitchcock walk-on and you could just kill me in every movie.'"

kOoNtz cONtroL

The soon-to-be-released movie *Hideaway* is based on the Dean Koontz novel, but the horror author's name is conspicuous by its absence from the trailer. The reason is that Koontz, who wasn't pleased with previous adaptations of his novels such as *Watchers* and *The Servants of Twilight* being released with his name all over them, would not lend support to this Jeff Goldblum-starring vehicle.

"The movie *Hideaway* is purported to be based on my book," said Koontz, "but I disagree. I've seen the movie and it's not even a loose translation." Koontz has higher hopes for upcoming film versions of *Mr. Murder* (from Savoy), *Phantoms* (Miramax), and the upcoming TV mini-series based on his current novel *Dark Rivers of the Heart*.

"I have creative involvement on all of those projects, and that's the only way I will ever consider a film deal anymore. I just can't sit back and watch what has happened to my work in the past happen anymore."

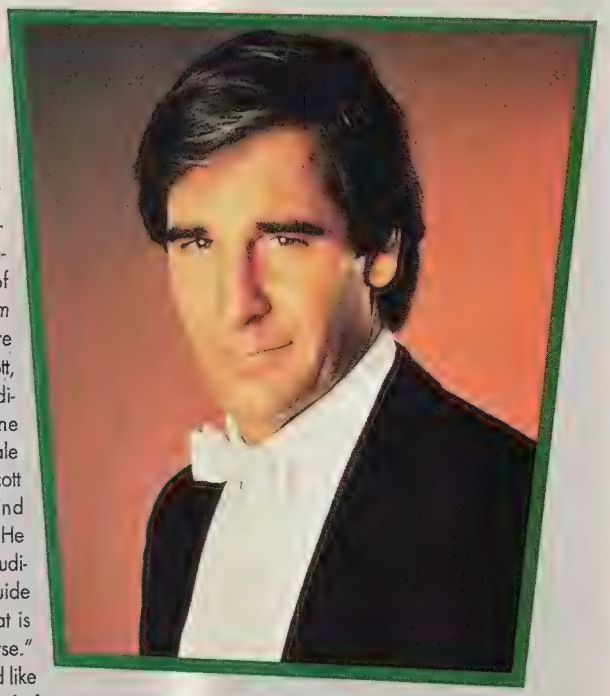
Koontz is currently in the middle of legal action against B-movie impresario Roger Corman who, he charges, has continued to use his name to promote what has become a *Watchers* franchise. Koontz on Corman? "Corman is not my favorite person at the moment, and that's putting it extremely mildly." Responded Maryanne Radini, publicity spokesman for Corman's Concord Pictures, "We don't need to make it personal, so we're not commenting."

cLiVE cHaNGES cOURSE

The latest Clive Barker film, *Lord of Illusions*, has thrills, chills, and blood. But Barker, taking a break during a recent day on the set of the film slated for release this month, acknowledged that Barker fans looking for a *Hellraiser* kind of experience will be surprised. "This is a different kind of horror movie in so many ways," Barker said of the Scott Bakula vehicle that combines horror and a '40s-style detective noir. "It's hero-driven rather than villain-driven. This picture very much follows the life of a hero who is driven into darker and darker secrets. This film will thrill and chill and distress and disturb but, hopefully, it will have a narrative that will draw people in on the level of a mystery."

Adding to the film's difference is what Barker concedes is the risky ploy of casting former *Quantum Leap* TV star Bakula in scare fare. "It is a risk casting Scott, in the sense that his TV audience is going to take one look at this film and go pale at the gills. But I believe Scott brings great humility and accessibility to the picture. He has the ability to take an audience by the hand and guide them through a movie that is extremely dark and perverse."

Barker obviously would like nothing better than for *Lord of Illusions* to be a box-office smash. But he remains ever the realist about the film's prospects. "I'm making movies in a genre that are never $100 million smashes. By and large, the audience for a horror film is solid, loyal, and modest. There are a lot of people who do not want to see a film like this. It's just too much for them. And that's fine with me."



Scott Bakula's fans may be shocked by his leap into horror with *Lord of Illusions*.

LeT's mAkE a dEaL

Saban Entertainment, the creators of the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers, has entered into an agreement with the new United Paramount Network to create children's programming for the new television network. The deal has Saban creating one hour of Sunday morning programming to begin in September 1995, expanding to two full hours of programming in fall 1996 and to two hours on weekday mornings in 1997. Saban Entertainment president Mel Woods reported that "projects are currently under discussion," but that nothing, even in regards to the September '95 debut hour, is definite. A Saban spokesperson further stated that it is not known at this point whether these projects will be animated, live-action, or a combination of both. No word yet as to whether the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers will be part of the expanded programming.

OuttakES

The Joe Dante-directed film adaptation of the Sunday comic strip created by Lee Falk, *The Phantom*, has been temporarily shut down until the financial support for this $40 million-budgeted movie is more securely in place. Billy Zane is set to play the jungle-inhabiting title character in the film, to be shot in Australia...Look for Marlon Brando to star in the second remake of H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Horror cult director Richard Stanley (*Hardware*, *Dust Devil*) is primed to direct...*Godzilla* has been put on hold, owing to technical and financial problems, and director Jan De Bont (*Speed*) has reportedly tired of waiting around and walked off the project...Along with *Zen—The Movie*, the long-awaited live-action feature film seeing release during this year's Christmas season, there will be a Zen animated series for television. The show will be developed by Graz Entertainment, animator of popular Saturday morning cartoons like *X-Men* and *The Tick*...Yes, they are making *Leprechaun 3*, and this time the titular elf goes to Las Vegas...The hot rumor is that Arnold Schwarzenegger will star in the new *Planet of the Apes* movie! We'll keep you posted. ☆

Marc Shapiro is a freelance writer based in Pasadena, Calif.

SCOTT BAKULA PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION

Wall-Crawlin'!

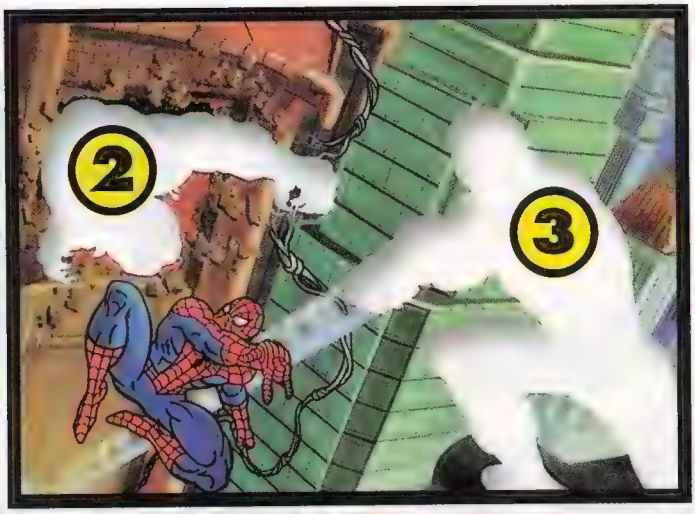
Yer pals over at Acclaim Entertainment and *Wizard* have joined forces to bring you some pretty cool prizes to celebrate the release of the new *Spider-Man* video game! Check out the goods!

Grand Prize (One winner)

A Sega Genesis system (one of the funkiest game systems around), Acclaim's new *Spider-Man* game, and an assortment of Marvel game titles including *Wolverine*, *Maximum Carnage*, and *X-Men*.

Second Prize (15 winners)

The all-new, web-slingin', wall-crawlin' *Spider-Man* game, for either a Sega Genesis or a Super NES.



So, who do ya have to clone to win that nifty stuff? Nobody. All ya gotta do is identify these five villains who are trying their bestest to bump off our friendly neighborhood Spider-Man. Once you've figured out who they all are, complete the coupon below, and mail that sucker off to:

ENTRIES DUE BY APRIL 28, 1995!

Wall-Crawlin' Contest

NAME

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PHONE DATE OF BIRTH

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2

3

4

5

Wall-Crawlin' Contest
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
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This contest expires April 28, 1995! So get crackin'!

WIZARD

Acclaim® entertainment, inc.

A Slew of Really Teeny Text

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Acclaim Entertainment, their immediate families, and that Nicholas Hammond joe. He couldn't act for beans as the '70s Spidey TV character. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and the five Spidey villains on the official entry form, a standard postcard, or a three-by-five-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Wall-Crawlin' Contest, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. The prizes will be awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Spins a web, any size...Catches thieves, just like flies...Look out...There goes the Spider-Man...**All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 28, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winners will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on May 1, 1995 by Wizard Press.

For a list of winners, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Wall-Crawlin' Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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CUTT BACK

Writer Chuck Dixon on why he writes so much at one time, how the Bat-writers don't see eye-to-eye, and how he relates to the Punisher.

By Paul J. Grant

Chuck Dixon, as painted by Dan Brereton.

ING

The Punisher, as drawn by John Romita Jr.

Chuck Dixon's bibliography looks like that of a man with two decades' worth of comic book work instead of one. Born and currently residing in Pennsylvania, Dixon broke into comics writing the two-issue *Evangeline* series for Comico in 1984. Now more than ever, the 40-year-old is at the top of his game, writing a veritable plethora of comics. In addition to his best known work on Marvel's various Punisher titles and DC's various Batman titles (including *Robin* and *Catwoman*), Dixon has written *Savage Sword of Conan*, *Ka-Zar*, *The 'Nam*, and *Moon Knight* for Marvel; *Alien Legion*, *Lawdog*, and *Car Warriors* for Epic Comics; *Huntress*, *Guy Gardner*, and *Green Arrow* for DC; *The Green Hornet*, *Racer X*, *Alias*, and *Supercops* for Now; *Airboy*, *The Black Terror*, *Mad Dogs*, and an adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy novel, *The Hobbit*, for Eclipse; and *Team 7* and *Prophet* for Image Comics. And that's only part of his prodigious output. The obvious question regards how he manages to get any sleep.

The Punisher™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group.

WIZARD: Probably more than anything else, you're known for the sheer volume of your work, in the Stan Lee-Mike Baron-Fabian Nicieza writing tradition. How do you pace and discipline yourself to get it all done on time?

CHUCK DIXON: When I was a kid, Stan Lee wrote just about all the comics I read, so I thought that was how fast you wrote a comic. I'm running right from the beginning. I race through it, and go back for a fast write-through. As far as discipline, I didn't have any until my wife and I had a little boy [in 1993]. Now I've got to write during the day, and I try to write at least four days a week from 10 in the morning until five, although if I'm in a crunch, I'll write until one in the morning. I don't think writers have discipline. That's why they become writers.

How do you keep them all straight in your mind?

It used to be easy when they were all different. When I was doing *Savage Sword of Conan*, *Alien Legion*, and *Moon Knight*, they were easy to keep separate because they were all different. Now, with the [multiple] Punisher and Batman books, it's getting a little more difficult. You create a villain and think, "What book do I want to use him in?" It's been almost 10 years that I've been pushing out this much work, and I really think '94 was my last year for doing so much. I'm looking forward to '95, when I can cut back. I kept thinking that I had to write a lot for about five years to stay on top and keep my name out there, and five years turned into a lot longer.

What in the world ever possessed you to get into writing comic books?

I never wanted to do anything else. I wanted to be an artist, but as I already mentioned, I didn't have any discipline, but I was just fascinated with telling stories in pictures. When I was a kid, I drew lots of my own comics, because I didn't have any friends who were artists.

How did you sneak into the industry?

Persistence. I tried every angle, every way. I'd work up the energy every three years to take a run at it. I'd go around the companies and generally get nowhere. I'd go to the conventions and meet pros, a lot of whom were on their way up at the time and are popular now. My biggest break came from simply knowing [artist] Hilary Barta. He told me about [Marvel editor] Larry Hama needing a writer on *Savage Sword of Conan*, and Larry sent me on my way with Marvel. He was a real good guy to break in with, and he had a lot of the same story sensibilities and approaches to work that I appreciated, and still appreciate.

That was your first published work?

No, *Evangeline* was my first published work, but it was with Comico, and basically anyone who could string sentences together could probably get work there. When I went to Marvel, they had never even heard of *Evangeline*. My first break really was on *Savage Sword of Conan*, because that got me into the grind to prove my reliability and that I could hack it every month. Maybe "hack" wasn't the best word. [Laughs]

Actually, with *Savage Sword*, maybe "hack" is the perfect word.

Yes! I chopped my way in, through a wall of living flesh, and got into Marvel. After that, Larry told other editors about me. That's how it happens. They find out that you know how to use a calendar and have more than two ideas in your head.

By the time you came on board, all the original material by Robert E. Howard, Conan's creator, had been pretty well exhausted. What sources inspired your scripts?

I went back to one of my loves, which was ancient history, and used Icelandic sagas and Roman history as the basis for a lot of Conan stories. I probably did more Conan stories with no supernatural elements in them than any other writer, because I tried to avoid what Larry used to call the "Monster-of-the-Month" or "Wizard-of-the-Week" story. One of my favorites was Harald Hadradi of Norway, one of the last of the great Vikings. He once jumped giant chains the Byzantines had stretched across the Bosphorous [Strait]. He had his crew run to the back of the ship to get the [front] up over the chains, and then they ran to the front and the ship slid over the chains and he escaped. I put that in a Conan story, and we got tons of letters saying, "That could never happen!" But it did. Hadradi *was* Conan. He was born on a battlefield, and eventually became a king against all odds. I'm convinced Howard read sagas about him.

Besides a love of ancient history, what kind of background led you towards becoming a comics writer?

I've always read a lot—not just comics, all kinds of books. I also read books on criticism, because once you look at other work critically you can view your own critically. I just blundered around, not knowing what I was doing or what I was aiming for, just going by gut instinct. My education came after I was already in the business.

Soon after landing *Conan*, you also started on *Airboy* for Eclipse. What attracted you to the revamp of the character?

Ryan Delvecchio, the mysterious Black Terror.

I always loved Airboy after reading about him in Jim Steranko's *History of Comics* back when I was a kid. I actually dreamed of bringing him back, but never thought it would happen. When Tim Truman told me Eclipse was interested in having me write it, they had to peel me off the floor. I think the enthusiasm really shows in the first 10 bi-weekly issues. When you're just breaking in, you say, "This probably won't last long, so I better throw everything in at the beginning." Thus, all the high adventure stuff with bullets flying and bodies dropping was in the first 10 issues, because I thought it would never last.

Airboy actually ran for 50 issues, though, and gradually became less high adventure and more self-conscious about the character and what he represented in a real world fashion.

That was due to [Eclipse editor] cat yronwode. [She] and I could not be more politically divergent, although I did enjoy working with her on *Airboy* and I thought her contribution was tremendous. After a while, her contribution began to override mine, and on a couple of particularly miserable issues I was told what to write. I'm not the writer you tell what to write; it's better just to get me off the book. In reaction to that, my scripts would go way far to the right, so she'd pull me back towards where I really wanted to be. I was writing to see what I could get away with, and that doesn't make for a fun book. The idea of a 17-year-old kid running around with guns and airplanes, what's the big deal? But there was a lot of soul-searching Eclipse wanted placed in there.

There's a heavy dose of adolescent wish-fulfillment at the heart of _Airboy_.

Absolutely, and that's one of the fun things about writing [DC's] *Robin*, although he's a much more complex character than Airboy. Airboy was doomed to be the least interesting character in his own book, because the supporting cast was fascinating. He's the one you identify with. He's the road into the story.

The next project you took on was the second _Alien Legion_ series for Epic, which was essentially hard-boiled space opera.

Carl Potts, who created the series with [artist] Frank Cirocco, hired me on the basis of my *Airboy* work, because he refused to read *Conan*. He gave me carte blanche. Another high point was it gave me my first chance to work with [Epic editor] Archie Goodwin, which was—and continues to be—a joy. Larry Stroman [series artist] was a lot of fun to work with, because he wanted to get weirder with the aliens, and I was all for that. Most of the characters, except for the core members, were ones I had created, and that makes doing a book with a large cast easier, because you know things about them that you haven't written yet and readers don't yet know. My experiences in writing *Team 7* have been somewhat of a nightmare, because I'm writing characters created by four or five different creators, and that gets to be tough.

Alien Legion, _Team 7_, and _The 'Nam_ are all variations on the "Men at War" theme. Is the theme that universal, or are there significant differences?

On *Alien Legion* or *Team 7*, you hype up the macho stuff and there's no real damage done or prices paid. Whereas writing *The 'Nam*, which I was very apprehensive about taking over because I'm not a [Vietnam] veteran, [Marvel editor] Don Daley wanted me because he knew I'd do the homework, and talk to veterans. I wouldn't have put anything in there that absolutely couldn't have happened. There, I felt the responsibility to show the price that men pay at war, so it wouldn't be a Sgt. Fury book. There was a lot more psychological trauma there, although I didn't want to fill the book with whiners, either. I wanted to be true to what happened and the effects of the war, without showing the vets as white-eyed psychopaths or mental wastoids. *The 'Nam* was a tough book to write.

Did you write either of the two Punisher story arcs in _'Nam_?

I wrote the second arc, [issues #67-#69].

That probably garnered more flak than anything that appeared in _The 'Nam_, bringing a fictional Marvel Universe character into a book that focused on the war in a "real world" way. What was your reaction to that criticism?

I hated the concept of the Punisher in *The 'Nam*, but it was explained to me that we had to do something about circulation. The book was supposed to go 99 issues, and we were trying whatever we could to make it there. I think Marvel made a big mistake in taking it off the newsstand, because that's where its sales were.

Have veterans ever come up to you at comic conventions and commented on your work on _The 'Nam_?

Never, although I've gotten a lot of comments about *Evangeline* and *Airboy*. I had a guy offer me his Green Beret for stuff I had done in *Evangeline*, which was real weird. I didn't take it because I didn't earn it.

"Moon Knight, on the surface, is Batman, but Moon Knight would have to stand on a chair to kiss Batman's butt. Moon Knight is a great costume with no character in it."

Next, you did two years on _Marc Spector: Moon Knight_, a character who most people consider a Batman clone. Was that a warm-up for doing Batman?

No. Moon Knight, on the surface, is Batman, but Moon Knight would have to stand on a chair to kiss Batman's butt. Moon Knight is a great costume with no character in it. I floundered on that book for two years trying to find a direction, and I never could. It was a primer for writing the Punisher, because it was the first mainstream Marvel book I'd ever

MOON KNIGHT™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. THE BLACK TERROR™ & © Beau Smith, Chuck Dixon, and Don Bennton.

done. I got to use guest stars and I got the Punisher in there twice because I was dying to do the Punisher. The Punisher was probably the only character I ever campaigned to do. I let everybody know.

You've probably done more Punisher stories at this point than any other writer.

I worked on all three titles, plus specials and graphic novels. I would write Punisher before doing anything else. It was like eating dessert first. This sounds really weird, but I identify with the guy. He's a tragic figure with every negative male stereotype going, and he's just a blast to write because he's the guy every guy would be if there were no women in the world. They'd live in a Quonset hut and spend all day cleaning guns and hiding their emotions from each other. I get a chance to write real hard-boiled, nihilistic crime stuff, because the Punisher is a criminal and he has a criminal's mind. I took years getting used to Batman before I felt comfortable, but with the very first Punisher story I hit the nail on the head.

Of all the Punisher artists you've worked with, do you have any favorites?

John Romita Jr. comes to mind. He brought an Italianness to the character, which I thought was terrific. Nobody could beat his mobsters. Johnny's other talent is his body language. I would knock out half the dialogue I had written because it wasn't necessary. You could tell by the way this man's standing, what he's thinking. But I got to work with some of the best talent in the business: John Buscema, Russ Heath, Joe Kubert...The list goes on and on.

How do you avoid becoming repetitious with the Punisher? After all, he doesn't have a lot of depth.

It's almost that lack of depth that makes him fascinating. He can be funny, but he doesn't realize he's being funny. The joke is always on Frank Castle. I could write him forever, but I've done just about everything I wanted to do with the character. I got him to meet Batman.

I get the impression you feel your whole life was leading up to the opportunity to write Batman.

Writing Batman, to me, was like dreaming of becoming a rock star. It was a complete fantasy. I never even thought of trying to write Batman. I figured I got the Punisher, I'm happy, I don't need anything else, and then I got the [first] *Robin* mini-series and that was my road in. I love Batman.

Why were you chosen to write *Robin*?

Batman editor Denny O'Neil chose me based on *Airboy*, because I'd written a young character. Nobody expected the first mini-series to sell as well as it did. They underestimated how much people wanted Robin back.

Especially considering how many fans had voted to kill off Tim Drake's predecessor as Robin, Jason Todd.

I think that's the point. It was Jason Todd they were killing, not Robin. Jason Todd was a character who got away from them, and they could just never get it back. When I took over, I already had the basis from [writers] Marv Wolfman and Alan Grant that Tim Drake was a more thoughtful character, and I just took it from there. He'll never be overconfident and cocky, and never secure in his job as Robin.

What's the formula for turning a sidekick into a star?

I hated Robin when I was a kid, but years later realized that all my favorite Batman stories had Robin in them. When they handed me the mini-series and it was up to me to turn Tim Drake into Robin, I decided to make a Robin I liked. When you think about it, the last thing Batman needs is a boy hostage, someone he has to worry about all the time. I wanted to put all those fears into Tim Drake's head. I think he's the first Robin who thinks that Batman will someday take the costume back. Tim is one of those rare characters who I think one day will say, "Why am I doing this?" and quit forever. He's too damn sensible, and not as driven.

You're the first writer who has really shown what Robin's life must be like while out of costume, as a real teenager with homework and hormones.

Teenagers have told me that they appreciate the book, because I'm not trying to be hip or cool. I'm not using the latest slang; I'm

BATMAN and ROBIN ™ & © DC Comics

BATMAN & ROBIN

"In my early issues, you can tell I was uncomfortable writing Batman, because I gave most of the dialogue to Robin and Alfred," Dixon admits. "Now it's a lot easier for me to write Batman...and Bruce Wayne."

The biggest thing on Dixon's *Detective Comics* schedule is a three-part Joker arc which he and series penciler Graham Nolan hope will be the "ultimate" Joker story. The high concept is that for the first time, the Joker's insanity plea does not work, and he's convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to the electric chair. The Joker is sent to a real prison, which leads to what Dixon describes as "an *Airplane* version of a prison movie." In addition, Batman has qualms as to whether the Joker is really guilty.

Also on the agenda is a storyline with King Snake and Lynx that will run from *Detective* to *Robin*. The Triads send killers to wipe out King Snake, who has a falling-out with Lynx, and a big Asian gang war ensues which Batman, Robin, and the Huntress must stop. He's also working on a Man-Bat mini-series with Flint Henry (*Lawdog*), and a mini-series focusing on Commissioner Gordon.

Finally, at the next Batconference scheduled for March, the team will begin building towards *Detective* #700 in 1996. While details are still very much under wraps, Dixon reports that the buildup will involve Bane, and he's already at work on *Vengeance of Bane II*.

PUNISHER

Has Frank Castle, a.k.a. the Punisher, worn out his welcome? After all, at the ends of *Punisher* #100 and *Punisher War Journal* #75, he's locked in a basement and Lynn Michaels (a female cop) and C.C. (a former Navy Seal picked by Microchip to replace Frank) have become the new Punishers. In 1995, Dixon will write all three titles, but *War Journal* and *Punisher War Zone* are heading towards cancellation, so it's up to him to wrap up some loose threads before the character's next major overhaul.

Castle's partner Microchip, who feels that Frank has lost his mind, has locked Frank away and anointed C.C. as the new Punisher, which will be the focus of the next few issues. Payback and Lynn Michaels run for their lives because, as Dixon puts it, "everyone [original *Punisher* mini-series writer] Steven Grant created is after them." A new character called Stone Cold arrives on the scene with a mission to wipe the Marvel Universe clean of armed vigilantes.

Another big event is that Bullseye will show up, under the employ of mob boss Rosalie Carbone, to finally get rid of Frank Castle, not knowing that Castle is a prisoner. Dixon will also continue with the adventures of young hackers Mouse and Pony. "I think they're the most sensible characters in comics," he explains, "because all they want to do is get out."

Dixon and artist Gary Kwapisz will be taking Frank Castle to the Savage Land in an upcoming prestige-format title. He goes undercover as a mercenary hired by the terrorist organization Hydra to guard heroin fields in the Savage Land. Dixon describes the book as "The Punisher as Tarzan," with Castle enlisting Neanderthals to destroy Hydra's bases.

just using what I remember of the worries I had. Every kid at that age feels like the whole world's on their shoulders. They're growing up with feelings they never had before. They're having responsibilities placed on them, and they're wondering about the future. Tim Drake's involved in all of that.

The Batman books have a definite team approach. How does that dynamic work?

It's weird the way the books break down to our strengths as writers. On *Batman*, Doug Moench is doing the high adventure, straight superhero stuff; Alan Grant on *Shadow of the Bat*, does the more wacky and psychological stuff; and I'm on *Detective*, the crime-driven book. The few times we've all tried to write a story together, we would begin to see how different our approaches were. We don't agree on anything other than Batman. Political discussions are banned at dinner at the Bat-conferences. "Knightfall"/"KnightQuest"/"KnightsEnd" worked because we were all in on the big picture, which was given to us by Denny, but we were all doing our parts of it. It's on single storylines like "Prodigal" and "Troika" that we get into trouble, because we don't see eye-to-eye at all. Except on the *Batman/Spawn* [crossover]. We plotted that in the morning, and then pulled names out of a hat to see who would do the beginning, middle, and end. That went easy.

Your single most noteworthy contribution to the Batman mythos is arguably the introduction of Bane. What was the inspiration for that character?

I argued that it was a mistake to try to create a new major villain from whole cloth, because there was no guarantee the readers would like him. The best villains are created by accident. So Denny gave me the job of creating him, because I was the most skeptical. At that time, his genesis was as an evil Doc Savage, intellectually and physically superior to Batman, whose only downfall was that he was out of his mind as the victim of a bad childhood. I wanted to have him born in prison, to make him alien to our culture, and took it from there.

Bane seemed to gain immediate popularity with fans. Azrael, on the other hand, really alienated almost everyone when he took over as Batman.

We did our job way too well on Azrael. We didn't want the readers to like him and we made sure of that in a big way. Halfway through "KnightQuest," I was thinking, "I can't wait until Batman takes this punk down." The letters were passionate. Some of them were abusive, some even scary.

The third Bat-title you worked on is *Catwoman*, which you'll have left by the time this sees print.

Denny wanted me to take it over full-time, but I would only commit to four issues, and then I got ideas for a few more. Our working title for the four-issue arc was "La Femme Nikitty." [Laughs] What the arc accomplishes is it gives her immunity, and gets Batman off her tail. I would have loved to stay on the book, because it's straight crime stuff with heists and I love that. Debbie Pomerantz will be taking over as writer when I'm done. She hasn't worked in comics, but has written for TV and movies.

Batman emerged rather unscathed from last summer's continuity streamlining *Zero Hour* mini-series.

We took that opportunity to clean up continuity that had bothered us. His knowing that Joe Chill had killed his parents had bothered me since I was about eight years old. Why would he keep being Batman after he caught Joe Chill?

You recently took over writing *Green Arrow*, as well. What's your take on that character?

I had been asked to take over *Green Arrow* a couple times, and I had no interest because I never really cared for Oliver Queen [a.k.a. Green Arrow], much the same way I never cared for Robin. Eventually, I agreed, and I'm really enjoying it. I don't like the Oliver Queen character, but I like writing him. Conner Hawk, his current partner, is in a hero worship phase right now about Oliver, but that will change.

You've recently signed on with Image, doing a *Team 7* mini-series and taking over writing *Prophet*. What's that like?

I just started writing a second *Team 7* mini-series. I'd love to go back further in time before they developed psionic powers and show them

BANE ™ & © DC Comics

It was Dixon who brought us, and the Caped Crusader, Bane.

as a straight paramilitary group, but Image doesn't seem interested. I said no to *Prophet* more times than I said no to *WetWorks*, but finally I told [Extreme Studios] editor Eric Stephenson I'd see what I could do. But I couldn't get my brain around it, and called him back and told him I couldn't do it. 15 minutes later, [Prophet creator] Rob Liefeld called and said, "You can do whatever you want. Start on page one and go." We'll see what happens.

Any plans on doing any more creator-owned books like *Lawdog*?

I've got a sequel to *Winterworld*, a series I did with Eclipse, coming up from Epic. It's called *Wintersea*, and it's drawn by Jorge Zaffino. I'd love to do more *Lawdog*. I miss it terribly, and I'd love to do more with Flint [Henry, series artist]. I could just go berserk, and there's no one better to go berserk with than Flint Henry. I'm all for creator ownership, but right now I don't feel like going through all the proposal hassles. It's like dealing with Hollywood.

You're talking about cutting back. What do you see as your optimum work load?

If I could cut back to the equivalent of three monthly titles, it will feel like I've retired. I'm coming to the end of my string on the Punisher books and next year I will probably cut *Green Arrow*. I'd like to spend a year doing nothing but Bat-stuff. After all these years of running, I deserve to walk for a year. ☆

Paul Grant is a Michigan-based freelance writer.

Dixon's creator-owned *Law Dog*

LAW DOG™ & © Chuck Dixon and Flint Henry

GREEN ARROW™ & © DC Comics

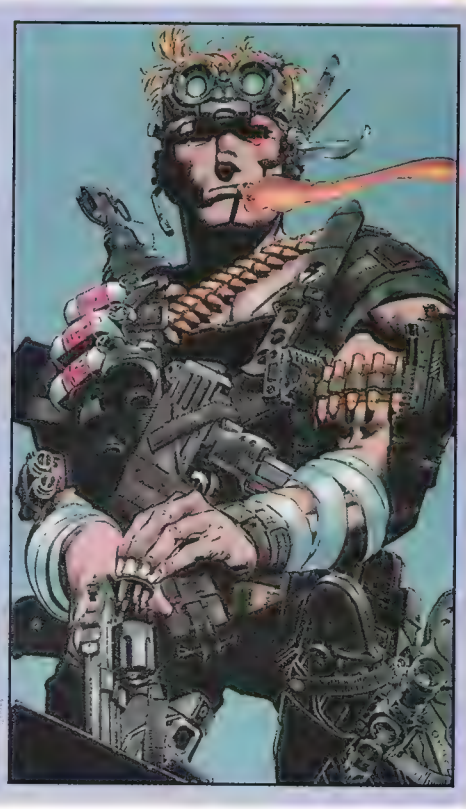
GREEN ARROW

Dixon has committed to write *Green Arrow* until at least issue #112, and has big changes planned for the title. Most important, as of issue #100, Oliver Queen will never be Green Arrow again. Conner Hawk—Queen's sidekick and son—will be taking center stage more and more until he starts as the new Green Arrow in #101. Queen will not be killed off, Dixon hastens to point out, but what will cause him to give up the role he's held for over 50 years will not be known until the landmark 100th issue. Plans are afoot to have Conner meet Roy "Arsenal" Harper, the former Speedy, and one-time Green Arrow teen sidekick. "They see eye-to-eye regarding what an irresponsible jerk Oliver can be."

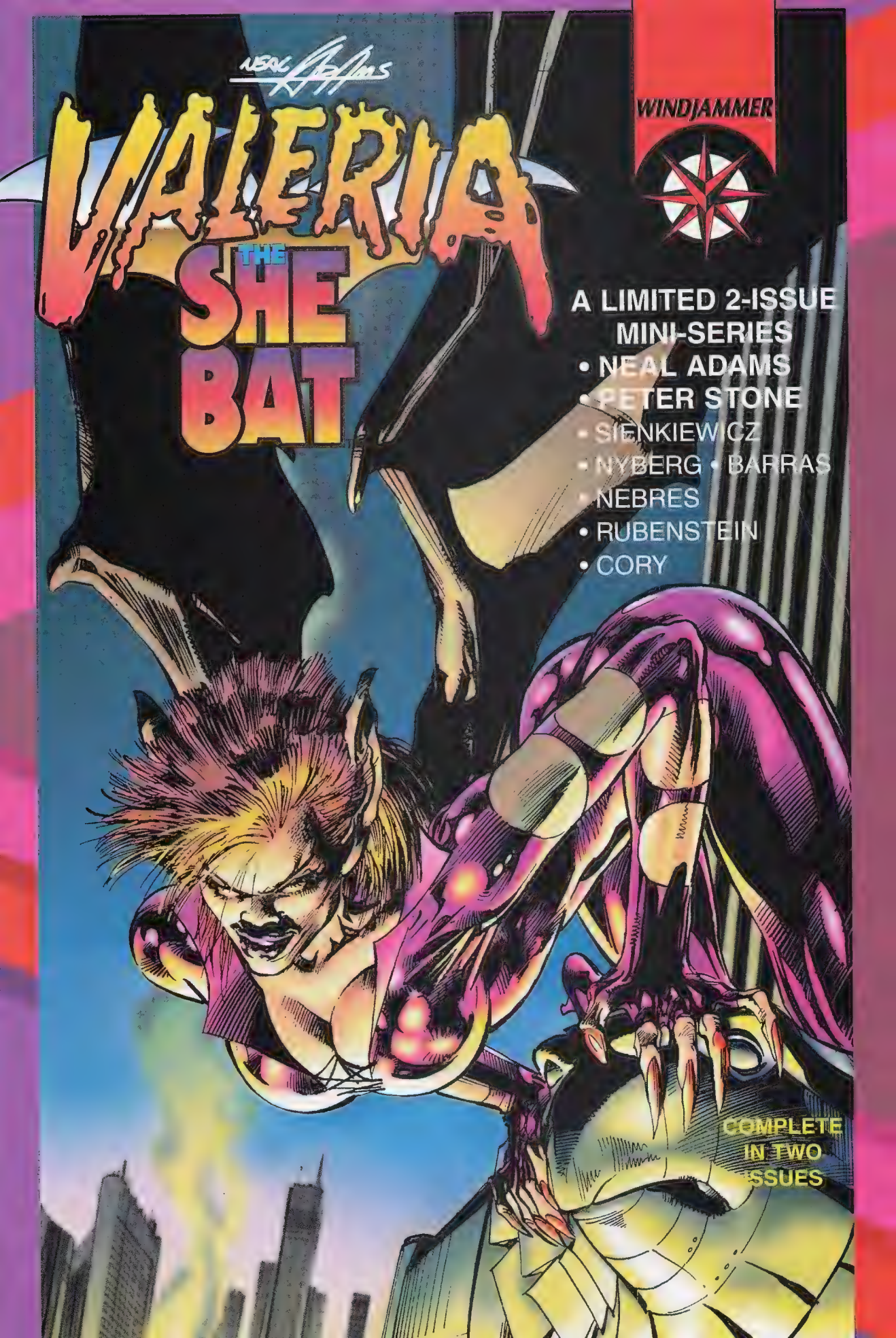
PROPHET/TEAM 7

For *Prophet*, Dixon plans on playing up the religious and time anomaly elements of the storyline, and giving artist Stephen Platt a lot of over-the-top action and collateral damage to draw. In the first three issues, Prophet will discover that everything he thinks he knows is wrong, such as the fact that he was not created in the 1930s by Dr. Wells. Prophet was actually sent to kill Dr. Wells, who ended up reprogramming him instead. Dixon says the book will be chaotic at first, but revelations will eventually clear some things up.

As the second *Team 7* mini-series begins in the late 1970s, most of the survivors of the first story have called it quits and are hiding out in Nicaragua, except for Cray (a.k.a. Deathblow), who's in the brig. They're called back to duty when their successor, Team 8, is destroyed, and John Lynch (Gen13) convinces them that this time it's a real mission and their country really needs them. "And, of course," Dixon chortles, "they get screwed again." A third and final mini-series is planned as well.



TEAM 7™ & © Aegis Entertainment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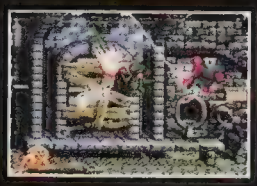

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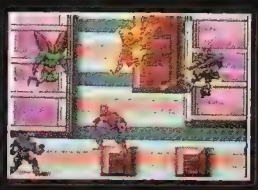

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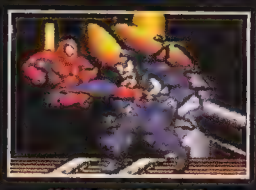

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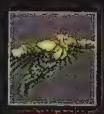

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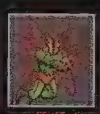

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Doom fans rejoice, for this is Doomsday! Yep, after about 743 botched attempts at world domination, Vic has finally conquered America (in the year 2099, of course). To commemorate this auspicious event, the good doctor—with some prodding from your pals at Marvel and *Wizard*—has agreed to give away something extra-spiffy to the serf with the most vision. What is it, exactly? Well...

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Here's how you win: take a national monument in the United States (like the Statue of Liberty), and show us, on a drawing board or unlined sheet of paper no larger than 8" x 11-1/4", how Doom would alter it after he becomes the Big Kahuna of America. Please note that your art can be in any medium—oils, line art, bloody finger, etc.—but neon inks just will not print, period.

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For the winner's name, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Doom 2099 Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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Hero of the Beach

The *Aquaman* creative team has made the character grim, given him a harpoon for a hand, and a new costume—and they're not finished yet.

By Craig Shutt

The new Aquaman is ticking off some long-time readers. Writer Peter David and the rest of the creative team have ruined the character forever, they complain. They've transformed the beloved undersea champion into a grim and gritty anti-hero. They've tinkered with his origin, replaced one of his hands with a harpoon, given him way too much hair, and trashed his classic costume. These guys clearly have no respect at all for this great character.

Peter David and the rest of the creative team respectfully disagree with that assessment. At least, they usually do it respectfully.

"I think it's pretty amusing to hear readers say, 'Peter David has made Aquaman grim and gritty,'" David says. He's not the writer who killed Aquaman's son, he points out. He wasn't the one who made the Sea King's wife go nuts, dethroned him, or ripped from him everyone and everything he ever held dear. "Aquaman, to my mind, has not exactly been a barrel of laughs for a long time."

Editor Kevin Dooley agrees. "Aquaman's been one of the big downers in the DC Universe for many years." A major reason, he suggests, comes from the character's underwhelming powers. "It's awfully hard to sell a guy who swims and talks to fish," he states.

When David began writing the 1993 *Time & Tide* mini-series that led into Aquaman's ongoing series, he was familiar with this heritage due to his popular seven-part 1990 *Atlantis Chronicles* series, which, appropriately enough, detailed the history of Aquaman's home of Atlantis. That work led to the writer's deeper interest in Arthur Curry, a.k.a. Aquaman. "I looked at this character who had been so depressed and had gone through so many things, but I realized that they'd all happened to characters around him. So I wondered what would happen if we had one final major, traumatic-type thing happen to his physical persona."

The answer: Have piranhas horrifically gnaw off his left hand in issue #2, and replace it with a harpoon. That event actually was foreshadowed in *Chronicles*, David notes. In that story, Aquaman's ancestor Kordax, a blond-haired man with dominion over the sea, also loses his hand. "He really served as the first draft for Aquaman," David explains. "I thought it was consistent to stay with that imagery and carry it through."

"Peter David did it," Dooley laughs. "It's all his fault." Actually, he admits, he doesn't mind the reputation some fans hang on him as the destroyer of Silver Age icons, which results from the recent revampings of another character's book he edits, *Green Lantern*, and here. "What I try to evoke from writers is that there are no boundaries," he explains. "I want them to feel free to suggest the most outrageous stories possible, as long as they fit the character's persona. Some fans disagree, but the changes to both GL and Aquaman are logical. And they definitely created a lot of excitement about the characters."

Adds David, "Coming out with an Aquaman story and getting any kind of reaction is something that ultimately has to be considered positive. I was expecting people to be appalled, but I'd rather they were appalled than complacent. You need to get people talking and interested and make them think they're going to see something they've never seen before, even if it's horrific. Some readers consider it ridiculous, and that's fine—as long as they're picking up the book and deciding that based on what's there."

In fact, Aquaman's former sidekick Aqualad is among those wondering if the Sea King might be one sardine short of a tin. "The question he and the readers are asking is: Is this a calculated move, or has Aquaman completely lost his mind?" David says. "Or does he want them to think he's lost his mind so they'll be intimidated? We don't yet know what's going through his head."

The harpoon serves a number of purposes, David explains. "It makes the connection to his rather villainous forbear, it served to push him over the edge, as it were, and it gives

This scene was painful for both the Sea King and his readers.

Aquaman and all related characters are ™ & © DC Comics

Aquaman, sporting his new duds, should really knock the crap outta Koryak (on right).

fans something new." As Aquaman himself mentions, Dooley adds, the harpoon also offers "a symbol of his dual heritage. It reflects man's inhumanity to sea creatures. Aquaman uses it to protect sea creatures and ultimately to protect mankind, too." Both men also point out that it gives him an edge on land that previously was lacking.

Aquaman can swim just fine with the harpoon, David counters to an oft-cited complaint. Most of the propulsion comes from his strength and motion from the hips down. "As long as he keeps the harpoon at his side, he has no problem."

While it won't become a Swiss Army harpoon, "I never intended it to remain just a harpoon," David reveals. "I've always planned for there to be changes, modifications, and evolutions to it." The first come in issue #9, when it becomes "an even snappier sort of weapon than it already is."

One thing that won't be added is a hook. "It drives me nuts when people call it a hook," he says. "If you're going to criticize it, criticize it for what it is. I deliberately tried to avoid all those jokes about Captain Hook, but people still tell them to me all the time. So screw 'em," he laughs. "A harpoon is cool, a hook is stupid."

So maybe the harpoon makes some sense. But why mess with his origin? "Personally, I would have been perfectly happy to go back to the concept that he was the son of a lighthouse keeper and the outcast woman from Atlantis," David says. But continuity at the time he was writing *Atlantis Chronicles* had Aquaman born of an Atlantean queen and an unspecified father. That led David to create the Atlantean wizard Atlan to serve the role of Aquaman's father in *Chronicles*.

David also found it hard to swallow the notion that Aquaman survived on his own as an infant. What was more acceptable? Being raised by dolphins. "The concept of a human—or a human-like being in Aquaman's case—being adopted by animals is one of the great standards of mythos," he points out. "I've always tried for a great mythic feeling in everything I've done with Aquaman and tried to give it that bigger-than-life feeling."

The toughest part, he notes, was fitting in Aquaman's half-brother Orm, the villainous Ocean Master. "That was the worst part of the mess I had to deal with," he complains. "It used to be simple: They had different mothers, which explained why Aquaman could breathe underwater and Orm couldn't. It was nice, it was simple, it was elegant, and it was gone!" One of the main differences between the two Aquaman origins, the "Pre-David" and present ones, is the parentage of Arthur and Orm: the first Aquaman and Ocean Master had the same father—Tom, the lighthouse keeper—but Arthur's mother was an Atlantean woman named Atlanna, and Orm's was just an normal woman. In the current continuity, Arthur and Orm each have the same type of mother as their earlier counterparts, but the father they share is Atlan, who conceived two sons because of his fervent belief that two brothers were to struggle for control over Atlantis. Orm now owes his underwater powers to Atlan, who ties Aquaman's new origin together fairly well. "No matter how tortuous, I had to drag the concept kicking and screaming back into continuity," David says of his work. "Whether I was 100 percent successful, I don't know, but I tried my best."

So maybe the origin isn't that far off. But do you really like that costume? "To be perfectly honest, it doesn't do much for me," David confesses.

Dooley has a slightly different opinion. "The

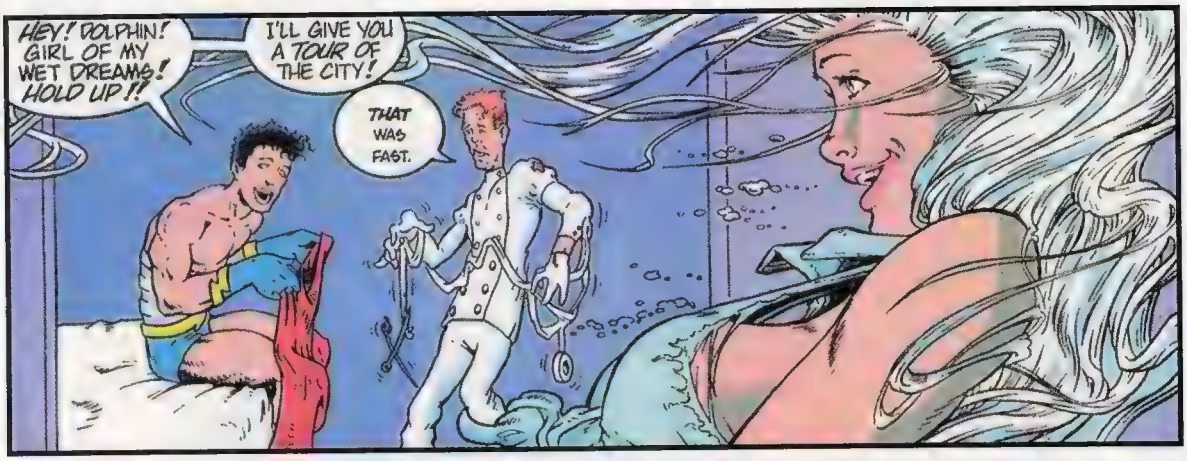
Full Steam Ahead

What lies ahead from the creative team you love to hate? The book's mythic ties will be stressed in the annual coming this May, when Aquaman crosses the godly paths of Triton and Poseidon. Superman and Wonder Woman (who is still Diana, a resident of Paradise Island, at the time of the story) also will appear, in a story penciled by Martin Egeland, Casey Jones, Phil Jimenez, Jake Jacobsen, and Jim Calafiore.

In the regular book, issue #8 finds Aquaman trapped between warring elementals: Naiad, the water elemental, and Corona, a fire elemental—who happens to be his former lover Kako. This issue also begins Aqualad's odyssey with Aquaman's father, Atlan.

In issue #9, the old Starman villain Deadline returns to bedevil Aquaman, in a story that could only be called "The Dreaded Deadline Doom." Also, Aquaman's formerly unknown son Koryak begins to reveal the tumultuous impact he will have on the entire DC Universe. According to David, "Koryak will be sticking with Aquaman for a while. Some fairly bad things are going to happen to Aqualad, and in the meantime, Koryak is going to be by Aquaman's side, so all the fans will be able to immediately turn and say, 'Oh, he's going to be the new Aqualad,' as if we're really dying to keep that name going. The lucky *Wizard* readers will know better, but I expect the Aquaman fans who are not in the know to immediately pigeonhole Koryak [as Arthur's new sidekick], so that when it turns out by issue #11 to be not that at all, people should be truly stunned."

Meanwhile, in issue #10, Green Lantern comes for a visit. It should be considered "must reading" for all those Silver Age fans gnashing their teeth over editor Kevin Dooley's handling of their heroes.



No one ever accused Aqualad (on left) of being subtle.

new costume is getting raves," he reports. "We've had a wonderful response, which kind of shocks me. I've gotten one negative letter so far, and that guy wanted us to return to the blue camouflage suit [used in the 1986 *Aquaman* mini-series]." Yikes.

Series artist Martin Egeland prefers the new look, too. But then, he designed it, with some tweaking by DC group editor Archie Goodwin on the gladiator-style armored top. "I definitely like the new costume better," Egeland says. "It's a lot more fun to draw. The old one needed to change." Besides, Dooley notes, Aquaman tore up those long-sleeved shirts every time he pulled one over his harpoon hand.

"Ultimately, it's kind of irrelevant what he's wearing," David suggests, because Aquaman will change outfits. In issue #9, for instance, he goes to S.T.A.R. Labs without his armored top because he's not expecting a fight (he finds one anyway). "I think it's much more believable that he'd wear different ensembles than that he'd wear his orange and green costume 24 hours a day," David says. In addition, current continuity makes the original outfit a prison uniform Aquaman was wearing when he escaped from such a prison, detailed in the 1988 *Aquaman Special*.

So maybe the costume will grow on us if it's not around every issue. But all that hair is still growing on Aquaman! His mane started sprouting during *Time & Tide* and just continued from there, Dooley points out. "It shows how far he's let himself go."

David is more emphatic. "I like the 'do," he says. "Readers complain to me that he's going to get his hair in his face all the time. This is a character that can survive under thousands of feet of water, he has gills, and he sees well in the ocean depths. Fans will accept all that, but they won't accept his long hair? I've never seen anyone breathe underwater, but I've seen lots of people with long hair." The hair floats up and away when he's still, David patiently explains, and flows behind him when he swims. End of story.

Regardless of the state Aquaman's in, the wealth of his supporting characters seems almost endless. Dolphin will play a major role in the series, as will Garth, who is also known as Aqualad—at least for a while. Now searching for a woman he believes to be his former (and now deceased) flame, Tula the Aquagirl, Garth will be torn away to another dimension. There he will meet Aquaman's father, Atlan. "Aqualad will stay with Atlan for a few years," David reveals. "But time in that dimension is different than here."

Garth will return an older, wiser, and very changed individual, with a new costume and name. "'Aqualad' is just a touch outdated," David notes. "I've always had a problem with them addressing each other as 'Aquaman' and 'Aqualad.'"

Are there plans for other past supporting characters—like Mera? "I have plans for Mera," David says. "But I'm not telling what they are." All he'll say is that "Mera will show up at the most inopportune time possible" within the next year. Her costume will stay just as it is (although thankfully her feet won't have those weird flippers).

And what of Aqualad's sweetie Tula? "I'm trying to avoid bringing back characters killed in [the 1985-86 *Crisis on Infinite Earths* maxi-series]," David says. "It's so damn easy to do that. I don't want to do easy stuff."

Considering what he's done so far, that's apparent. "I'm cashing in a lot of good-faith chips with my readers," David acknowledges. "I'm keenly aware of the trepidation fans feel. I know I'm mucking with a beloved character, but he deserves to be more than beloved. I want to make him interesting, respectful, and successful. I don't expect Aquaman to be everyone's cup of tea; I just want them to give him a try." ☆

Craig Shutt, a Chicago, Ill.-based freelancer who likes playing Devil's Advocate, also wrested promises from the team that neither Quisp nor the term "finny friends" will be returning.

Establishing Depth

Martin Egeland's published comics work can be summed up quickly: Malibu's *Freex* #9. That abbreviated list results mostly from a five-month stint on a title for Marvel's Barkerverse imprint that died prior to publication.

Fortunately for Egeland, editor Kevin Dooley had his samples on hand when he sought penciling candidates for writer Peter David to consider. David took one look and had his man. "I had a picture in my head of what I wanted the book to look like, and his style matched it," David says. "If I'd realized his background, I might have been a little more daunted," he laughs. "But nobody told me."

Aquaman poses some artistic challenges, notes Egeland, who claims Berni Wrightson as a favorite artist. "It's difficult to establish depth with no buildings around. There aren't a lot of background elements to work with, except for floating seaweed or fish." However, he adds, he doesn't have to worry about setting everyone into the same plane of reference, since they're all just floating around. "It makes it easier when everything's so buoyant."

That harpoon also causes some problems, he says. "Hands are very expressive, so you lose a lot of possibilities for capturing gestures with that taken away. It's difficult to make him interesting in scenes where he's standing talking with people."

Egeland is not yet up to drawing a monthly book, he admits. "Kevin Dooley has been really great helping me out with fill-ins," he says. To take the pressure off, #9 will be penciled by Joe St. Pierre, who works on *Spider-Man 2099* with David, while #10 will be done by Jim Calafiore, who also did #5.

"I'm having a lot of fun with the character and I want to help develop him over time," Egeland says. "His popularity is growing, and I want to be part of that. For the most part, everybody's digging it."

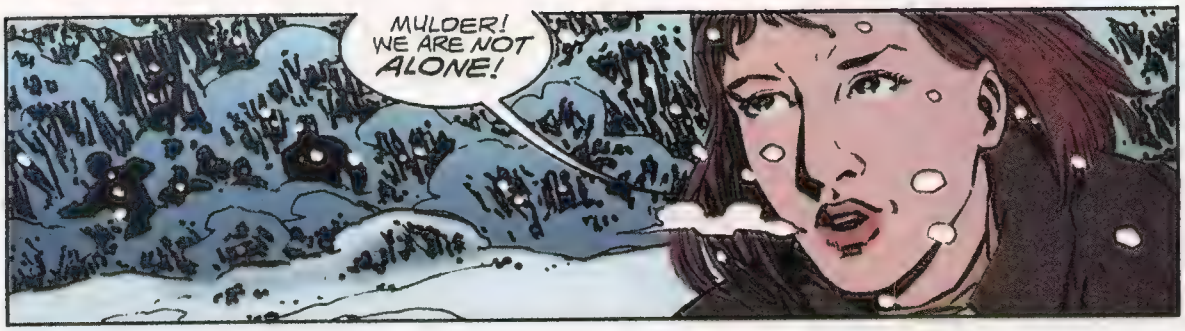
Agents Mulder and Scully of TV's *X-Files*: David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson.

File Under X

Working the dark corridors of the mind, the cult science fiction show *The X-Files* brings its peculiar eeriness to comics.

By Michael Berry

"The truth is out there." So asserts the tag line for *The X-Files*, the sleeper hit TV show of the Fox Network's Friday night lineup. And if your version of the truth happens to encompass alien abductions, wide-ranging government conspiracies, and apocalyptic prophecies, the new comic book version of the series should be right up your alley.



Written by Stefan Petrucha and illustrated by Charles Adlard, Topps's version of *The X-Files* strives to faithfully re-create the dark mood and bizarre plots of the television show. In moving from one medium to another, FBI agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder retain all of their spooky charm while investigating a whole new array of arcane mysteries and quasi-supernatural happenings.

"I am incredibly excited and passionate about this project," says Petrucha. "It's one of the best things that ever happened to me. I've always wanted to do this sort of thing in comics."

It was Petrucha, whose résumé includes First Comics's *Squalor* and Dark Horse Comics's *Nexus the Liberator*, as well as the current scripter for Topps's *Duckman*, who first spotted the potential for a good comic in *The X-Files*. A long-time student of UFOlogy and unsolved mysteries, Petrucha called Topps editor-in-chief Jim Salicrup after the second or third episode and mentioned how much he enjoyed the series. Six months later, Topps had its series.

By this time, at least two dozen writers were vying for the chance to script the book, but it was Petrucha who ultimately landed the assignment, largely due to his enthusiasm for the subject matter.

"I've had a love for historical and present-day anomalies ever since Erich von Daniken came out with [the book] *Chariots of the Gods* in 1972, when I was 13," Petrucha says. "[Its theme] 'Was God an astronaut?' seemed very dangerous and rebellious to me at the time. While not being an actual believer, *per sé*, I have quite a library devoted to that kind of material. As I grew up, I became fascinated with what people believe and why they believe it."

One thing *The X-Files* has proven is that, at least for an hour at a time, audiences are willing to believe in everything from pyrokinetic serial killers to humanoid sewer worms.

According to Petrucha, the show is very well-designed in terms of its main characters, Scully and Mulder, played respectively by actors Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny. "Scully and Mulder make a very nice dialectic. On a simple level, Mulder is the believer and Scully is the skeptic—which is getting kind of hard, because she held that alien embryo in her hands [in a recent TV episode]. But both characters also embody their opposites."

A Conspiracy With Every Story

Drawing from his own library of occult literature, Petrucha chose a few true-life mysteries as jumping-off points for *X-Files* comics adventures.

The first involves the prophecies of Our Lady of Fatima. In the spring of 1916, a trio of peasant children witnessed the appearance of a luminous human female believed to be a manifestation of the Virgin Mary, who spoke to them of the future. The kids wrote her visions down in the form of three prophecies and handed them over to officials at the Vatican, with the proviso that the last be kept sealed until 1960. When the reigning Pope opened the final envelope, he publicly declared that the prediction did not apply to his time. But there are those who believe that the envelope held a far more sinister message.

From this mix of history and speculation, Petrucha spins a tale that suits the dark milieu in which Scully and Mulder operate. A terrorist organization steals the final Fatima prophecy and attempts to deliver it to someone in the United States. Unfortunately, everyone who reads it goes crazy and dies. As Mulder and Scully track it down, they debate the possibility that the so-called "angels" in the past were actually alien visitors.

Issue #2 deals with a UFO crash similar to the one that supposedly occurred near Rosswell, New Mexico, in 1947. In the *X-Files* story, approximately 50 people witness the event. Petrucha says, "The surviving witnesses [are] in the present day; as they start to recall something about their experience, they're murdered one by one. And Scully and Mulder are hot on the case, to coin a phrase."

Issue #3 picks up a running subplot directly from the TV series, the possible return of Mulder's long-missing sister. "One of the members of that mysterious inter-government conspiracy is sort of cut loose, and finds himself in desperate straits," says Petrucha. "So, he approaches Mulder for some illegal help and in exchange, offers Mulder the return of his sister, Samantha. Mulder has to decide whether he believes him, and what to do if he does."

Although issues one through three are single-issue stories, Petrucha says that they have

Topps Comics's interpretation.

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Mulder and Scully get their hands dirty.

KEN STANFORTH/FOX

elements that tie into a "meta-story" that spans the first year's 12-issue story arc. Petrucha will be introducing new antagonists, exploring Mulder's network of contacts within the U.S. government, and bringing back at least one villain first encountered on the television show.

Issues #4 through #6 comprise a three-part story revolving around the Tunguska explosion of 1908. The actual event occurred in a remote swampy area of Siberia, where a 375-mile stretch of forest was blasted to cinders by a massive object that fell from the sky but didn't leave any crater behind.

Capturing Likenesses

With ideas like this through writer Petrucha, it was time to find someone to handle the art chores. Charles Adlard, who drew Topps's popular *Mars Attacks*, fit the bill. "The thing we were impressed by was that, even though *Mars Attacks* had aliens, spaceships, and cities blowing up, Charles was very adept at handling the scenes with regular human beings," says Jim Salicrup. "If he could make that stuff seem dramatic and interesting, then he was the man for *The X-Files*."

At the time Salicrup tapped Adlard for the assignment, *The X-Files* had not yet debuted in the United Kingdom, the artist's place of residence. Topps was obliged to have special videotapes made for him, so Adlard could watch the series and get a sense of its visual design and off-the-wall sensibility.

Of course, when adapting a hit TV show, the main characters must resemble the actors playing them on the small screen.

Salicrup says, "Charles himself admits that he's not the best at likenesses, but coincidentally, one of his comic book artist friends in England had done the comic book adaptation of the movie *Amerika*, which had David Duchovny in it. So he had plenty of photo reference to work with from that source."

Although the two have yet to speak even by phone, Petrucha admits that he and Adlard work well together: "He's got the likenesses down well. I'm very happy to be working with him. I try to keep the panel breakdowns loose so he has freedom of input on that level."

Crazy Like a Fox

Speaking of freedom of input, all the plots for the *X-Files* comic must be approved by Fox and the show's creator, Chris Carter. Fortunately for everyone involved, the transition from television to comics has come with relative ease. According to Salicrup, the only major hurdle in dealing with the network has been the long time lag between the submission of scripts and their eventual approval.

"It's a particularly hard show to put together: it doesn't have the kinds of big budgets the other networks get to play around with, and each episode is akin to creating a different mini-movie. Chris Carter, quite rightly focuses all his attention on making the series as good as possible. In the meantime, he has approval over novelizations and comic books. But if he's going to spend two or three weeks working non-stop on the show, we've got to wait that amount of time to hear back from him."

"What conspiracy?!"

Petrucha realizes, however, that there could be a major plot twist looming on the TV show which could alter his future tales. Last season, for example, the status quo was unhinged when Mulder's shadowy protector, Deep Throat, was killed off, the X-Files were officially closed, and Scully and Mulder were sent in different directions. Petrucha says, "I want to keep continuity as close to the show as possible, but sometimes that proves to be a little difficult, given comic book schedules and TV schedules.

"There are certain things that you can do in the comic that you can't do in the show. I suppose the major disadvantage in the comic book is that you don't have Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny performing. A major advantage is that it costs as much to draw a cup of coffee as it does to draw the Siberian Tundra. So, we can go places and do things that might be prohibitive in the television budget."

The show, which has proctored an enormous cult following, has finally received honorary recognition due to winning the Golden Globe Award for Best Drama Series back in January. Petrucha, quite enthusiastic about the award, says, "I'm pleased because of my love of the show, and because I think it strikes a blow for fantasy and anomaly shows everywhere."

According to Salicrup, the producers of *The X-Files* understand how seriously the Topps team takes its assignment. "I think Carter's been impressed enough to express interest in some of the stories we've come up with, perhaps adapting them in some way to the TV shows. But that's very premature at this point."

For the moment, though, Petrucha is busy devising new conspiracies for Mulder and Scully to investigate.

Asked whether he has even witnessed an anomaly worthy of an *X-Files* episode, Petrucha says, "Sure, I've seen things I can't necessarily explain. When I was very young, I thought I saw a UFO. Could have been an alien, could have been indigestion. Who knows?"

Well, Stefan, the truth is out there, if you want to go looking for it. ☆

Michael Berry is a freelance writer based in Berkeley, Calif. Well, that's what the government wants you to believe anyway.

SPINOFF HOPES

Is there an *X-Files* spinoff series in the works over at the Fox Network? *X-Files* creator Chris Carter admits that, "The Fox Network has been asking me to whip up something, but right now *X-Files* is an all-consuming job. Right now the idea of doing another series is a gleam in someone else's eye."

Well, the gleam is apparently in the eyes of *X-Files* executive producers Glen Morgan and James Wong who apparently have *Space*, an action/adventure series, in development at Fox. No script, cast, or storyline is currently available, but Fox press folks are quick to point out that this is not an *X-Files* spinoff. According to a Fox spokesperson, the network has "been talking to Carter about an *X-Files* spinoff and Carter is working on something."

Nothing has been officially announced on this mystery project as of yet, but Fox spokespeople indicate that the new series will not involve *X-Files's* irregular visitors the Lone Gunmen.

— Marc Shapiro

Schwarzenegger

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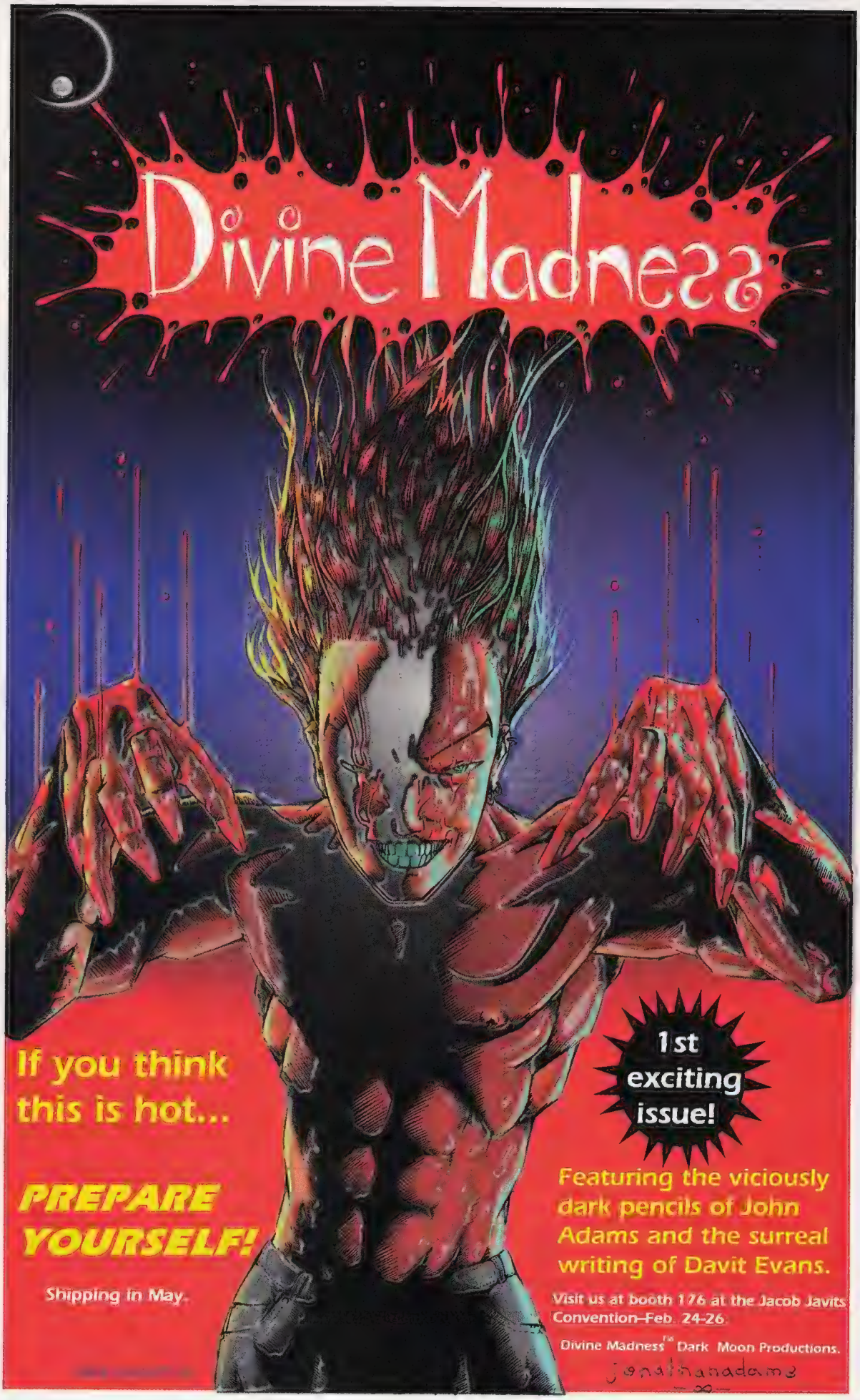
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HERE'S A CONTEST YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING!!!

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That's right! Spider-Man and Mary Jane are having a baby!. Will it be a boy or a girl? Will he or she have "powers" like his or her father? What should he or she be named? That's up to you.

You can win a free page of original art drawn by fan-fave Mark Bagley for creating a birth announcement with the following information:

Baby's Name
Boy or Girl
Height
Weight
Special Powers
or appearance

Write your name, address, phone number and age on a 3x5 index card and include it with your Spider-Baby Birth Announcement and mail your entries by May 15th to

Spider-Man Baby Announcement Contest
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151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

Sorry, this contest and winning entry will not affect the plotline of the Spider-Man books themselves.

All entries must be received by May 15th, 1995. Limit one entry per envelope. No purchase necessary. Content of entries will have no effect on editorial content of any Spider-Man book. Print your name, age, address, city, state, zip code and telephone number with area code on a 3 X 5 index card and attach the form or card to the back of your Baby Announcement. Contest open to US residents only, except employees of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. and WIZARD PRESS, any affiliated companies, promotional and advertising agencies and their families are not eligible. All entrants grant to the sponsors permission to use their [illegible] and likeness in advertising and promotion for the contest. All entries including the copyrights contained therein [illegible] the property of Marvel Comics and will not be returned. Winners will be decided on or about May 30th, 1995 and will be notified by [illegible] mail. [illegible] equivalent or substitute prizes are offered. [illegible] reserves the right to substitute a prize if necessary. The prize will be awarded to the [illegible] of the contest winners and is not transferable. Void where prohibited by law. MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP and WIZARD PRESS are not responsible for [illegible] late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be selected by the staff of Marvel Comics from [illegible] selected by the Wizard staff based on art quality and originality. Winners list available by sending a self addressed stamped envelop to "Winners List - Spider-Man Baby Contest" c/o Marvel Comics, 387 Park Ave. South, NY, NY 10016. Winners shall be responsible for all applicable taxes. Void where prohibited by law. Sponsored by MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. and WIZARD PRESS.

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WITH SEAN AUNE

Malibu Toys to Debut at Toy Fair

With Toy Fair knocking on the door, I have ascertained some information from the highly secretive toy manufacturers before the Fair actually happens. (Toy Fair, incidentally, is the annual event where most of the major toy companies unveil that year's new toys.)

As reported months ago, Malibu Comics has signed a contract with Galoob Toys, manufacturers of such lines as Biker Mice from Mars and Micro Machines, for a line based on the company's upcoming UltraForce cartoon. The figures and television show will debut at the same time, but no firm date has been set as of yet, although sources say that fall is a safe bet.

At this time, twelve figures have been announced. They are: Prime (with metallized gauntlets and chest plate), Prototype, Hardcase, The Night Man, NM-E, Ghoul, Sludge, Primevil, Lord Pumpkin, Rune, Avalon, and Topaz.

A first look at Malibu's Prime action figure.

There will be four vehicles in all, but only two are known right now, a motorcycle style vehicle and a four-wheeled vehicle. No name has been decided upon for either vehicle as of yet. Also, be on the lookout for a nameless playset due out at some point.

Galoob originally only contracted for eight figures, but after seeing some design drawings, it decided to go for 12. More details on this line will be announced at Toy Fair.

The Image Comics series *Pitt*, by Dale Keown, is inching its way towards a toy line even as we speak (or read). Several toy companies have been drawing up ideas and sketches for the line, but no deals have been signed at this time.

In other Pitt news, the recently solicited miniatures based on the title character will come in two versions. The main version will have a production run of around 5,000 and will be cast in silver. The twist is that every fifth miniature shipped will be gold. Only 1,500 of these will be produced, and they are sure to be a hot commodity, due to their limited production run.

There's a new line coming out in January and February which no ExoSquad or Robotech fan expected, but fans of both groups will want. Playmates, which obtained the licensing rights to Robotech—"The Original Battle Machines"—will "team" Robotech's Attack Mecha and E-Frame battle machines with the popular ExoSquad's own E-Frames. "Adding a proven commodity like Robotech will give the [strong-selling ExoSquad] line a whole new dimension in 1995," said Karl Aaronian, vice president of marketing for Playmates, in a recent press release. The toy line will include the ExoSquad/Robotech E-Frame/Battloid Assortment—with fully articulated 3-inch battle machines—and the ExoFrame Attack Mecha Assortment, both featuring Robotech members like Raidar X, Spartan, and Gladiator. There will also be a Battlepod Assortment in the ExoSquad/Robotech series. Each Battlepod is almost a full foot tall, and seats any ExoSquad figure in a fully-armed Attack Mecha. So "Mankind's Last Hope" now has an extra battle force to help 'em out.

Since the San Diego Comic Con report in issue #39, there have been a few changes in the lineup of certain Toy Biz toy assortments due for release this year. The assortments listed here are due in April, with more expected throughout the year. Here are the current standings:

X-Men Assortment M:
Cameron Hodge/Phalanx
Maverick
Senyaka
Sunfire Solar Armor

Prime & UltraForce logo ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc. Background Art ™ & © Eclipse.

Wolverine in Fang Costume

Spider-Man Assortment 4:
Spider-Man Black Costume
Spider-Man Web Glider
Mysterio
Chameleon
Prowler
Venom II with Eddie Brock head and Venom mask

X-Force Assortment G:
Mojo
Black Tom
Cable Cyborg
Avalanche
Commando
Exodus

Fantastic Four Assortment 3:
Thing II with removable street disguise
Namor
Annihilus
Adam Warlock
Attuma—The Atlantis Warlord
Triton
Super Skrull

Iron Man Assortment 3:
Arctic Armor Iron Man
Hulk Buster Iron Man
Tony Stark with Iron Man Armor
Century
Dreadknight
U.S.Agent
Titanium Man

Dragon Assortment:
Fin Fang Foom
Silver Dragon
Gold Dragon

Also due out in April from Toy Biz are some vehicles and accessories. They include:
14-inch Galactus
Thing Skycycle
Mr. Fantastic One Man Jet

Toying Around Mailbag

Once again, we delve into the Toying Around mailbag and come up with a bunch of questions about how to remove price tags from a package without causing any damage to the toy. The easiest way to do this seems to be the use of lighter fluid used in refillable cigarette lighters. (But please do this with some supervision—we are talking about a flammable substance here, folks.)

The procedure here is to hold the package flat with the price tag being face up. You need to squeeze enough lighter fluid so that the price tag is completely covered in the fluid. This fluid does have a tendency to run around the card and off the card, so be careful where you do this. Please note that this stuff stains, so it is suggested that you do this on a surface you don't mind damaging, such as a scrap piece of wood, over a paper towel.

Once the price tag is completely covered in fluid, let it set for a few seconds so that it has enough time to disintegrate the majority of the glue holding the tag on. Whatever you do, **DO NOT LIGHT IT**. You may then begin peeling the tag off, making sure to go slow, so that in case some of the glue is still there, you won't tear the card. If the tag is still sticking, give it another douse with the lighter fluid, let it set for a few seconds, and try again.

After the tag is removed, there will usually be some glue residue, but that can be fixed with another dose of lighter fluid and simply wiped off. Repeat this until it is cleaned to your satisfaction. One important note is that the older the price tag is, the harder it is to remove the tag. Also, some glues crystallize after some time; once this happens, you really do not have much hope of removing all traces.

And in case you are wondering what effect all this will have on the card from being covered in liquid, there seems to be no side effects, but that doesn't mean it'll work with everything, so be careful with expensive goodies.

WARNING: ALWAYS READ ALL DIRECTIONS AND WARNINGS ON THE LIGHTER FLUID PACKAGES!!! And ALWAYS do this with the supervision of a parent or guardian. In other words, don't be a dummy.

Be sure to be here next issue as we bring you the news from Toy Fair '95. This year promises lots of surprises, so until next time, see you in aisle 7C.

Sean Aune is a freelance writer and owner of Splash Page Comics and Toys, a store in Kirksville, Mo.

Also coming to a store near you, Prototype (top) and Hardcase figures.

Prototype and Hardcase ™ & © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc.

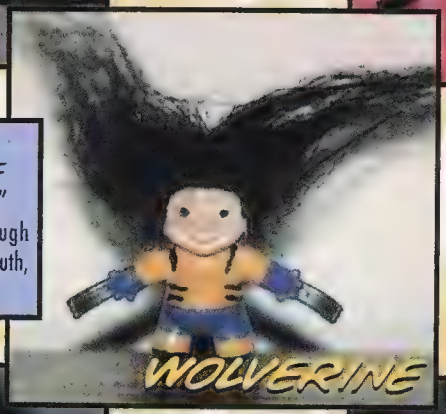
HOMEMADE HEROES

For taking a whole load o' regular-lookin' toys and creating such spectacular homemade versions of their favorite characters, everyone whose figure sees print this month wins a copy of *WildStar* #1 signed by Jerry Ordway, and a copy of *Prophet* #6 signed by Stephen Platt. The two runners-up win all of that neat stuff plus a set of the 10-inch Toy Biz Wolverine, Sabretooth, and Cyclops figures, a copy of *Agent Three-Zero* #1 signed by Stephen Platt, and a copy of the Collector's Edition of *The Ray* (ongoing) #1 signed by Joe Quesada. The Grand Prize winner wins alla that stuff plus a limited edition, hand-painted Savage Dragon statue by Clayburn Moore! Congrats to all! **Special thanks to Erik Larsen and Clayburn Moore for the happenin' Dragon statue!**

The arena for fan-made action figures.

"YOU PUT YER RIGHT HAND IN, YA PUT YER RIGHT HAND OUT..."
Using a Mego Flash Gordon doll as a base model, Brian Leitner of Rochester Hills, Mich., made the near-omnipotent Solar, Man of the Atom. How 'bout that?

"ONE POTATO, TWO POTATO, THREE POTATO, FOUR. HA-HA, WOLVIE, YOU LOSE AGAIN!"
These time-flipped mutants were made courtesy of Dan Veesenmeyer of Edina, Minn. Wolverine was made from a Toy Biz Weapon X head and Wolverine III body. Sunfire was made from a Toy Biz Pyro head and a Toy Biz Morph body.



"GRRRR. THAT'S THE LAST TIME I PISS OFF THE MOLECULE MAN!"
Just when you thought you'd seen enough Wolverine variations, Jeremy Zoss of Plymouth, Minn., comes up with this li'l smiley guy!

"HEY, WHO TURNED OUT THE LI...AH, CRAP. I FORGOT TO CUT OUT EYE-HOLES AGAIN."
Is this guy a cool-lookin' (and completely underused) Marvel character, or what? Trevor Ellis of Brockton, Mass., must think so. Stingray, here, was made from a Toy Biz Silver Surfer I figure.

"STEROIDS? NO. ME JUST HAF BEEG MUSSELS."
Brian Weber of Eagle, Wis., crafted Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon outta a Toy Biz Cable III figure.

Savage Dragon ™ & © Erik Larsen. Stingray, Wolverine, & Sunfire ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Solar ™ & © Western Publishing and Voyager Communications.

"HI, I'M THE NEW 'PROBABLY HAS A SOME SORT OF SOCIAL DISEASE BARBIE!' WANNA NECK?"
Can you believe that's a Mattel Barbie doll underneath there? That's what Heather Bredberg of Locust Valley, N.Y., used to make this Lady Death doll.

"WHADDAYA MEAN LAVENDER IS A GIRLIE-MAN COLOR?!?"
Dave Ballance of Federal Way, Wash., made this Anti-Spawn figure, appropriately enough, from a Todd Toys Spawn figure. Ain't he a cutie?

SECOND PRIZE winner

SECOND PRIZE winner

"HEY, MAX, CAN YA BELIEVE WE GET PRIZES JUST FOR STANDING HERE?" "WHAT'S WITH THIS 'WE' CRAP? HOO-HAH!"
Hey! It's Steve Purcell's Sam and Max (Sam's the dog)! Both were hand-sculpted from Super Sculpy™ by Eric Bort of Avon, Ohio.

GRAND PRIZE winner

"BOOTS...TOO HEAVY. MUST...REACH...TOILET!"
Capturing the flair of Ash perfectly, Chris Spaseff of Tempe, Ariz., made this sucker from a Toy Biz Shatterstar figure.

hey!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (again, no Polaroids!) to:
Homemade Heroes
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

Lady Death ™ & © Brian Pulido. Anti-Spawn ™ & © Todd McFarlane Productions Inc. Sam & Max ™ & © Steve Purcell. Ash ™ & © Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti.

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—art by Michael Golden

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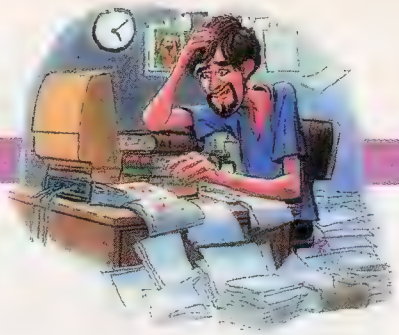


Schrab's *Scud*

Rob Schrab, the creator and artist behind *Scud: The Disposable Assassin*, combines the sensibilities of modern action movies, the disciplines behind improvisational comedy, and pop-art techniques to bring a fresh approach to making comic books. The story of *Scud* involves a robot assassin who will self-destruct upon the termination of his programmed target. Scud defies his programming by merely crippling the creature he was assigned to dispatch, so now he must kill for money to keep the creature on life support. What follows is a completely outrageous spree of blood and bullets, as Scud takes on wave after wave of mutants, guys with guns, and zombie dinosaurs.

Rob Schrab acknowledges the influence the film world has had on his work. "I try to make my comic books like a movie. They are put together like a storyboard for a film, rather than a piece of literature that you can read and make up in your mind what's going on." The stories in *Scud* are heavily influenced by the films of action movie directors John Woo, Sam Raimi, and Quentin Tarantino. Schrab is especially influenced by the characters in these types of films. He has an affinity for tough-guy characters like cowboys, pirates, and firemen. Or, as Schrab puts it, "things that symbolize manliness in society. They live by the gangster mantra: be a stand-up guy, take care of your own. Cowboys will do these things. They're dirty guys, but they'll give the bad guy until sundown to get out of town. There's a code of ethics. They may not be an ethical person's morals, but there's definitely a set of morals there."

Schrab also draws an attention to action from movies, but his loose, bouncy style focuses on readability as well. "You'll see a comic where they devote a two-page spread to one punch, and I'll look at that and say, 'That's a nice drawing, but it's not that interesting.' I'll try to fill the page up with as many panels as possible to speed up the action. The more panels you have on the page, the faster it's supposed to move. I think it develops a real rhythm that causes the action to move really quickly."

The loose action of *Scud* also comes from Schrab's background in improvisational comedy. Schrab got his start with Comedy Sportz, a nationwide chain of comedy clubs where the audience picks a winner between improvised routines from two teams of competitors. "It's all improvisational and competitive. It's real family-oriented, politically correct, fast food comedy."

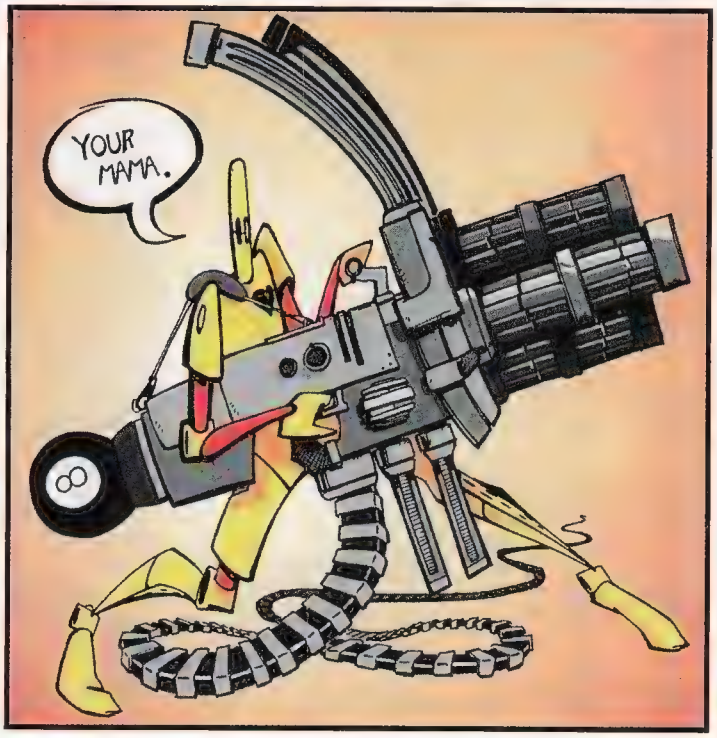
In *Scud*, Rob Schrab also draws an attention to action from movies, but his loose, bouncy style focuses on readability as well.

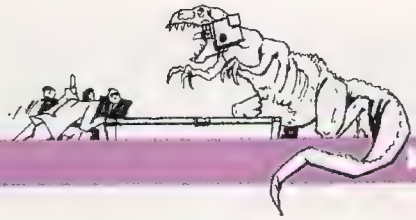
Schrab and a group of friends formed their own comedy troupe, the Dead Alewives, from their work in Comedy Sportz. Schrab explains that, "The kind of family-oriented, working-man's comedy routines that we were putting together at Comedy Sportz stopped being improv and started becoming routines that we fell into. We wanted to do something different, so the Dead Alewives was put together." Schrab describes the off-the-wall comedy of the Dead Alewives as "a show where one week we could be completely G-rated and the next we could be NC-72. It's just real experimental comedy."

His work in the Dead Alewives has helped Schrab with the informal nature of *Scud*. "The Dead Alewives is a great teacher for something like comic books. When you're forced to improvise a scene and develop a plot and characters right off the top of your head, you train yourself through peer pressure alone not to repeat yourself. You're forced to be creative and imaginative at the drop of the hat. That's why *Scud* has a stream-of-consciousness feel to it."

Schrab collaborates on *Scud* with some of the other members of the Dead Alewives. "Peter Alberts and I are the nerve center [of Fireman Press, the book's publisher]. Peter takes care of all the business, everything that I'm too stupid and lazy to do. I take care of the art and pretty much where the sto-

The Scudinator.





By Tom Palmer Jr.

Top: Lunch time!
Above: Scud searches for employment.

ries are going and what I want to do with the series." Some of the stories in *Scud* were co-written by Schrab and fellow Alewives Mondy Carter and Dan Harmon. "It's a loose collaboration. We bounce things back and forth. [It's] pretty much a bunch of guys getting together, going to a bar, and talking about robots."

Despite all of the fun and games behind the making of *Scud*, Schrab feels that his background in art plays an important part in his style. "I went to four years of art school at Milwaukee Institute of Art Design, and I find it invaluable in drawing. If you are self-taught to draw through comic books, you may be a great comic book artist, but you're going to look like everyone else."

A crucial part of his training was art history. "I think exposing yourself to different forms of art from the beginning of time is a great pool of art information to grab from. It really gave me a diversified style. I have a big animation background, but I'm also into pop art like Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, as well as art nouveau and art deco."

While Schrab admits that "comic books are great fun," he is looking forward to bringing *Scud* to other media. "The main goal for Fireman Press is to get *Scud* animated in a TV series, film, or short subject. We're trying to get it all around Hollywood to the people we respect."

But Schrab doesn't plan to drop everything just yet. "I really like the potential with this character, so I plan to keep working with it until I find a decent place to end it. Right now, I don't see a definite ending. It's definitely not a one-shot, so I would like to continue with it as long as there is a demand for it." ☆

Tom Palmer Jr. is a freelance writer from New Jersey who gets very cranky in the early morning.

PICK OF THE MONTH

Zero Zero—With 60 pages of comics for under $4 ($3.95 to be exact), you can't beat the first issue of *Zero Zero*. This new bi-monthly anthology from Fantagraphics, which should be on sale this month, features work from *Raw* alumnus David Holzman, *Boiled Angel* creator Mike Diana, *Big Mouth*'s Charles Bukowski, *Crap* creator J.R. Williams, and others, and it's wrapped with a painting by Gray Panter, who designed the sets for *Pee-Wee's Playhouse*.

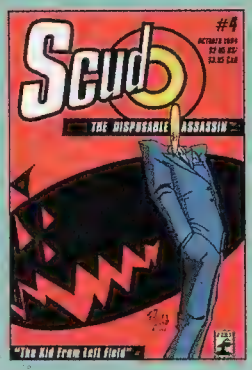
Rob Schrab's Recommended Reading: On a recent trip to the comic book store, Rob Schrab says he "picked up [DC's] *Batman Adventures* series. I enjoyed looking at it a great deal. I really liked the bold black lines and the variation of thickness in the lines. I kind of wish it was in black-and-white. I feel that the color fleshes it out too much." He also looked at *Johnny Dynamite*, "and the latest issue of Frank Miller's *Sin City*. I really enjoy Frank Miller. He's got a real film look to his stuff. I used to study *Dark Knight* before I started working on *Scud* because I wanted to do something film-oriented." Schrab also likes *The Mask*, *Marshal Law*, *Madman*, and *Roachmill*. "I just go into the comic book shop and look through everything. Usually I'll stay in there for three hours and not come out with anything. It's too bad, but everything just looks the same. It's frustrating, because I'll go into the comic store looking for something that is fun and doesn't bore me with talking and explaining some boring history that I really don't care about. I just want to see something with lots of weird characters and great drawing, but I walk away disappointed most of the time."

Tom's Recommended Reading

Scud: The Disposable Assassin—You can find the sixth issue of *Scud* right now at your local comic book store. If you can't, then you can order it, as well as copies of the first five issues, for $2.95 each. Include $1.50 shipping and handling for each book, and send your money to Fireman Press, 2430 N. Humboldt Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53212.

The Dead Alewives—If you want to see what the Dead Alewives are all about, then you can order a videotape of one of their shows. Send $7 (and $2.50 shipping and handling) to Fireman Press at the address above.

T-Shirts—You can spice up your wardrobe with one of three different T-shirts from Fireman Press. The company has a full-color Scud shirt for $15, a white-on-black Scud shirt for $12, and a black-on-white Dead Alewives shirt for $10. Add $2.50 shipping and handling for each shirt, and order directly from Fireman Press.



Scud and all related characters ™ & © Rob Schrab

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

CBIQ

That's right, it's time once again to rattle your brains and impress your peers with all of that useless comic book knowledge you've garnered over the years, when you shoulda been studying for the S.A.T.s. What follows are 25 of the hardest questions ever slapped together by a band of greased-down fanboys.

This time around, we're grading you against the stupidest things that have happened to Captain America. The higher the score, the dumber the thing.

score	rank
0-5	Check out Cap's great new headgear!
6-12	Teen Cap.
13-19	Cap almost transformed into a woman!
20-24	Facing imminent death, Cap wishes his death on anyone else but himself. (How patriotic of him!)
25	You, too, can star in a Broadway show with Captain America!

1. Which superhero pair hasn't been a member of the JLA?
A) Hawk and Dove
B) Fire and Ice
C) Blue Beetle and Booster Gold
D) Mr. Miracle and Oberon

2. Who was the original Hobgoblin?
A) Ned Leeds
B) Norman Osborne
C) Flash Thompson
D) Who cares? It was the lamest identity revelation on the planet, anyway.

3. Which of these heroes does not have a musically inclined close friend?
A) The Hulk
B) Flash
C) Cannonball
D) Aquaman

4. During the "Love Showdown," Archie finally settled for:
A) Betty Cooper.
B) Cheryl Blossom.
C) Veronica Lodge.
D) Jughead.

5. In Post-Crisis DC history (Hah!), the Earth-2 Wonder Woman was replaced in the Justice Society by:
A) Black Canary.
B) Fury.
C) Miss America.
D) Miss New Jersey.

6. Cerebus married Red Sophia because:
A) He was promised a huge wad o' cash.
B) He was drunk and drugged at the time.
C) He was forced to at knife-point.
D) She was preggers.

7. Which of the following characters did not start out evil?
A) Hawkeye
B) Scarlet Witch
C) Quicksilver
D) Rogue

8. Perry White is known for saying each of these phrases except:
A) "Great Caesar's Ghost!"
B) "Don't call me chief!"
C) "Sweet Jesus in a smoking birch-bark canoe!"
D) "Great shades of Elvis!"

9. Who killed General "Thunderbolt" Ross?
A) The Hulk
B) Zzzax
C) The Leader
D) Some funny-lookin' little pink guy

10. Captain America defeated the vampiric Baron Blood by:
A) Throwing him in a pool of holy water.
B) Waving crosses at him.
C) Fighting him outside in the sunlight.
D) Cutting Blood's head off with his shield.

11. Who didn't noticeably change their appearance or costume in '94?
A) Ice
B) Robin
C) Wonder Woman
D) Green Arrow

12. Who helped Dr. Doom release his mother's soul?
A) Reed Richards
B) Doctor Strange
C) Mephisto
D) Brother Voodoo

13. What is the name of Captain Picard's Lion Fish?
A) Livingstone

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B) Sinbad
C) Wanda
D) Lunch

14. Prior to "Fall from Grace," who did not know that Matt Murdock was Daredevil?
A) Karen Page
B) Ben Urich
C) Foggy Nelson
D) No one. Everyone in the whole friggin' Marvel Universe knew it.

15. Which side of the coin does Two-Face always scar?
A) Heads
B) Tails
C) Both
D) Neither—it's a federal offense to deface money, buddy!

16. Madman's favorite weapon is his:
A) Colt .45.
B) Frisbee.
C) Yo-yo.
D) Boomerang.

17. Which superhero does the Ray write letters to?
A) Superboy
B) Anima
C) Impulse
D) Black Canary (Isn't she a little old for him?)

18. Mojo first appeared in the pages of:
A) *Longshot.*
B) *X-Men.*
C) *Uncanny X-Men.*
D) *Excalibur.*

19. Which character has not experienced a gender switch of some kind?
A) Martian Manhunter
B) Mantra
C) Mighty Man
D) Aric Dacia

20. Who was not a member of Power Pack?
A) Lightspeed
B) Snitch
C) Mass-Master
D) A better question would be "Who cares?"

21. What did Phoney Bone give Smiley in exchange for the map of the mountain range?
A) Three rocks
B) A dollar (the big cheapo)
C) 50 bucks
D) Thorn's phone number

22. Luke Skywalker used to shoot womp rats in his:
A) Land Speeder.
B) T-16.
C) X-Wing.
D) Jedi don't shoot womp rats—it's mean!

23. Who tried to break up Yellowjacket and the Wasp's wedding?
A) The Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime
B) Jarvis
C) Ultron
D) Janet's long-lost cousin Vinnie, who just couldn't bear to see her marry some two-bit hero with an attitude problem

24. The first series of *American Flagg!* took place in:
A) Saint Paul.
B) Denver.
C) Memphis.
D) Chicago.

25. The Spider-Clone was created by:
A) Stan "The Man" Lee.
B) "Rascally" Roy Thomas.
C) "Merry" Gerry Conway.
D) Yeah, like you'd admit it if you did! ☆

MISSING LINK

WIN! *X-Men* (vol. 1) #95

Each month, we list three comic book issues that contain something in common: in content, characters, creators, or the like. Your job is to tell us what that something is.

For example, what do *Uncanny X-Men* #144, *Marvel Team-Up* #122, and *She-Hulk* (vol. 2) #8 all have in common? That's easy: all three feature guest appearances by the Man-Thing.

Get the idea? We'll randomly select an entry out of all the correct ones we receive. The winner of this month's contest will receive an ***X-Men* (vol. 1) #95**. So good luck, and good sleuthing!

Here are this month's batch o' books:

Gen[13] (mini-series) #1

Havok and Wolverine: Meltdown #1

Unc. X-Men #155

Send all entries to:
Missing Link #44
c/o Wizard Press
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Congers, NY 10920-2064
***Hurry!* All entries must be received by April 28, 1995!**

CONGRATULATIONS to Scott Fredrick, the winner of issue #39's Missing Link! Scott read the three issues—*Inhumans Graphic Novel*, *Magnus Robot Fighter* #16, and *Wonder Woman* (vol. 2) #56—and realized they all featured a pregnant woman! Good going, Scott!

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, their immediate families, and anybody who doesn't read *Outsiders*. C'mon, you pansies—it's a great book. Print your name, age, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and the Missing Link on a three-by-five-inch index card or a standard postcard. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Missing Link #44, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064. Limit one entry per envelope. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press, and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prize is offered. The prize will be awarded in the name of the contest winner and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Hey—the Eagles weren't nominated for any Grammies! Screw the music biz—what the hell do they know, anyway? **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 28, 1995**. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winner will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on May 1, 1995, by Wizard Press. All decisions are final.

For the name of the winner, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Missing Link #44 Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just watch this column!

ANSWERS

1.A	2.A	3.D	4.B	5.C	6.B	7.A	8.C	9.D
10.D	11.B	12.B	13.A	14.C	15.A	16.C	17.D	18.A
19.D	20.B	21.B	22.B	23.A	24.D	25.C		

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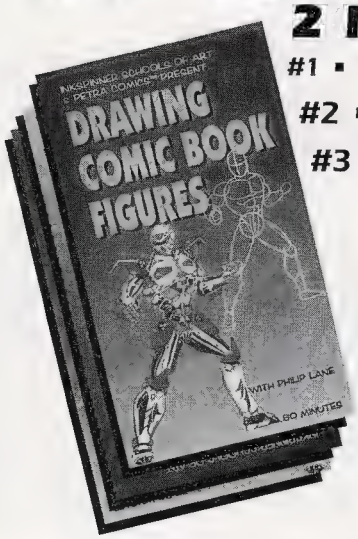

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143 ON THE RUN
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146 HANG TEN
147 QUEEN OF CHAOS
148 COMPUBOSS
149 CHECKLIST A
150 CHECKLIST B

[illegible]

H1 DOT AND ENZO
H2 ENZO AND MEGABYTE
H3 MEGABYTE AND HEXADECIMAL
H4 HEXADECIMAL AND BOB
H5 BOB AND DOT

[illegible]

C1 STARPILOT
C2 INDY RACER
C3 BEANSTALKER
C4 CLOWN
C5 THIEF
C6 WIZARD
C7 SPACE COP
C8 KNIGHT
C9 MARATHONER
C10 BOMBARDIER

[illegible]

SA1 DOT
SA2 BOB
SA3 ENZO
SA4 MEGABYTE
SA5 HACK & SLASH
SA6 HEXADECIMAL
SA7 FRISKET
SA8 PHONG
SA9 MOUSE
SA10 CECIL & MIKE

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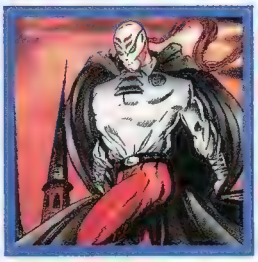
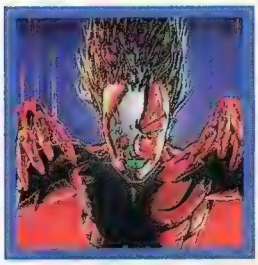
Dark Moon!

To help kick off the launch of Dark Moon Productions, your pals at Dark Moon and *Wizard* have teamed up for a happenin' contest where you can win some pretty keen original comic art. What art exactly? Glad you asked...





Grand Prize (One winner)

An original piece of framed Dark Moon art, spotlighting the coolest Dark Moon superheroes!

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3. RMLEZGLIH
4. GSRVHKRZM
5. WRERMV NZWMVHH

And when you're done with that, fill out the coupon below, and mail that bad boy off to:

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No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Moon Productions, their immediate families, and anybody who never mooned anybody. C'mon, it's natural and beautiful. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code, telephone number with area code, and the answers to the scrambled words on the official entry form, a standard postcard, or a three-by-five-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry to Dark Moon Contest, c/o Wizard Press, PO Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions will be accepted. All entries become the property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state, and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prize is offered. The prize will be awarded in the name of the contest winner and is not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated, or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purpose and rules hereof. Fifty yatoo?!? **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 28, 1995.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winner will be selected in a random drawing from all properly completed entry forms received at contest headquarters. The random drawing will be conducted on May 1, 1995 by Wizard Press. Hint: A=Z.

For the name of the winner, available after May 19, 1995, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dark Moon Winner, c/o Wizard Press, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920-2064, or just keep watching *Wizard*!

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Dark Moon Contest

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4

5

the Wizard of Cards

By Stephen Shamus

Cartoon Cards Continue

Fleer has a new non-sports, non-Marvel product on the way entitled *Reboot*, based on the Saturday morning program. This 150-card series features computer-generated art and is done in Fleer's premium Ultra-style. Eight-card packs sell for $1.49 each, which seems a little steep for a brand-new product that currently has a pretty small following. There are three different chase sets including: five HoloBlast cards (one in nine packs); 10 chromium cards (one in six packs); and 10 Suspended Animation cards (one in six packs). If you're a fan of the show—which is about characters who live inside of a computer and fight off viruses—then you'll probably want to get some; they'll be hitting store shelves in March.

Fleer has a slew of entertainment sets coming at you over the next few months, including the first of many movie sets and two Batman movie sets. The first Batman movie set is coming your way in late May, entitled *Batman Forever* Metal Set, which uses Fleer's new brand of high-technology cards. The second *Batman Forever* product, your straight movie card set, is due out in mid-June.

Casper the Friendly Ghost will be floating through Fleer's trading cards world in early May, Apollo 13 will be on store shelves in June, and *Waterworld* (from the flick starring Kevin Costner) will also be out in June. And the biggest one of all, The *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers* movie card set, will be out in late June. This rounds out Fleer's movie releases.

Fleer also has an MTV set on tap for early June featuring Beavis & Butt-Head, The Maxx, The Head, and The Brothers Grunt (the network's cartoon line-up) all wrapped up in one. Meanwhile, bringing to a close the first half of the year is Fleer Ultra Spider-Man. Last year's set was not an Ultra set, and didn't fare as well as the other Marvel sets, so it apparently was time for a change.

Wizards of the Coast is ready to release the sixth extension to *Magic: The Gathering*; this one's called *Ice Age*. This set will include over 300 new cards and can work as a stand-alone or in conjunction with *Magic*. Cards will be available in early summer '95 and come packed as 60-card starter decks (with rule book) and 15-card booster packs. More info to come.

Info on SkyBox's *Gargoyles* trading card set, featuring those high-flying wild cartoon characters, is finally here. It's a 90-card set scheduled for a March release, with six-card packs selling for $1.49. The cards utilize the cels from the show to make up the card set. Randomly inserted will be five pop-up cards, probably one per box, and five double-sided Spectra-Etch cards, also probably one per box. Disney is the company behind *Gargoyles*, and based on past Disney card popularity—a result of the large amount of Disney memorabilia collectors—this set should be very popular.

In other "TV set" news, there is a new *Star Trek* series, *Voyager*, which hit TV sets in mid-January, and SkyBox is not far behind in producing the trading card series to back it up. Also, SkyBox's *Lois & Clark* card set, adapting the show starring Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher (mmrrrrowww!), has been rescheduled from a February release to an April release. Sorry, Superfans!

A significant change has taken place in the SkyBox Youngblood series. The new price per each eight-card/one sticker pack is $3.99 instead of the scheduled $1.19. The cards will now be printed on a 24pt. stock (twice as thick as a regular card). This should turn off any kind of impulse sales and is now going to require a die-hard Youngblood fan to shell out $4 a pop (plus tax, natch!). SkyBox is putting nine exclusive cards (a different one in each issue) of the nine-part "Extreme Sacrifice" storyline. As a special bonus, the backs of the nine cards form a puzzle. These cards are not printed on the 24-pt. stock, but the regular stock instead.

Krome Productions, the manufacturer of those popular Lady Death chromium cards, is back with an all-new chromium set based on (now *here's* a switch) Betty Boop. Today's younger collectors may know her as the waitress in *Who Framed Roger*

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Fleer Ultra plugs in with *Reboot*.

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Boop-oop-a-doop. Krome's all-chromium Betty Boop set.

Rabbit? The set is entitled Betty Boop series 1, which implies that a series 2 is on the way. The set will contain 90 cards of original 1930s cartoons. There will be 20 full-color chase cards that were taken from later years of the character's existence; these come one per pack. Every box of 36 packs will contain one oversized card, 11 in all, featuring brand-new artwork, and 1,000 of these cards will be signed by the artist, Scott Sinclair. The production run is 3,500 cases—which is quite a bit for an entertainment card sets these days, even some sports cards these days—and each trading card box will be produced in all-chromium. Nine-card packs sell for $1.95 and will be coming your way in March.

In April from Comic Images comes The Phantom card set, a character made famous by Lee Falk and now by Marvel Comics. This 90-card set contains original artwork from The Phantom archives, as well as artwork from the new Marvel mini-series. Here's the chase card rundown: six chromium cards inserted at a rate of three per box; 500 24-kt. signature cards (with computer-generated facsimile signatures); a three-card Rare Art set, at one per box; a Medallion card, at one in three boxes; and a six-card uncut strip of new cards, at one per case. Suggested retail on these babies is between 79 and 99 cents a pack.

A second series of Bone cards, all-chromium, is also on the way from Comic Images in April. It's a 90-card set that follows the storyline of *Bone* between issues #11 and #16. The backs continue a story that was begun in the first card series, released last May. There will be nine brand-spankin'-new pieces of art produced for the set by Jeff Smith, Bone's creator. He will also sign 1,000 cards to be randomly inserted in packs. Seven-card packs will set you back between $1.89 and $2.29 each. In addition to signed cards, six MagnaChrome cards, at three per box, feature the covers to *Bone* #11-#16. A three-card MagnaChrome set featuring Thorn, heroine and ingénue of *Bone*, is also inserted, at one per box, a Medallion card, at one in three boxes, and a set of six exclusive cards on an uncut sheet comes packed one per case.

As we touched upon last month, Collector's Edge is producing two card sets based on the Judge Dredd character (one's a movie set, one's based on the comic book character), as well as a POG set. The comic set, scheduled for release in April, contains 90 cards featuring original artwork by some of Dredd's artists, art from the magazine *2000 AD*, and some artwork from the DC comics. Chase cards include four Edgetech Death Dimensions Megachase cards painted by Simon Bisley (featuring his first interpretation of the Dark Judges), which utilize Edge's famous plastic stock, and three preview cards for this summer's movie featuring Sly Stallone. The movie set itself is also 90 cards, and includes high-tech subsets spotlighting the best scenes from the film. This particular set ships in June, right in time for the June 30 movie release. The chase card rate of insertion, pricing, and card counts for both sets were not available as of press time.

The Judge Dredd POG set, due out this month, contains 50 Spugs in all, featuring the comic book images of Judge Dredd. There are chase Spugs as well, ten in all, which utilize foil-enhanced technology. One of the five Spugs in each pack will be a gold credit Spug. These SpugCredit caps are redeemable for Judge Dredd licensed merchandise like comics, T-shirts, video games, and more (nine different prizes in all). Sold separately are the Judge Dredd slammers, which will be out a short time after the Spugs packs, and will be sold in blister packs with ten Spugs. Pricing was not available as of press time. You can collect all four slammers—2 Brass and 2 Silver-Etched.

Topps is entering the POG business with its first release of *Star Wars* caps, ready to go in April. It's a series of 64 caps and two slammers containing all the top *Star Wars* characters like Luke, Han Solo, Darth Vader, and many others. These caps also have a neat twist to them in that they contain point values on each cap. This way, you can make up different variations of the game on your own. Also, these points can be sent in collectively for *Star Wars* prizes. Collect enough points and you can receive different collectibles, as well as discounts on *Star Wars* merchandise. Four caps come in every 99-cent pack. Also, a promo cap will be inserted in the April cover-dated issue of *Star Wars Galaxy Magazine*.

Finally, Pinnacle, one of the top manufacturers of sports trading cards, is also getting in on the POG market with its own Slugs. These five-Slug packs use Pinnacle's Optigraphics technology, which gives each Slug movement as you turn it. There are 90 Slugs in all ranging from characters that get splattered to others that vomit. Packs cost 99 cents each and should be in stores now.

Even though he's co-publisher of Collector's Sportslook, *Steven Shamus is really a wart on society.*

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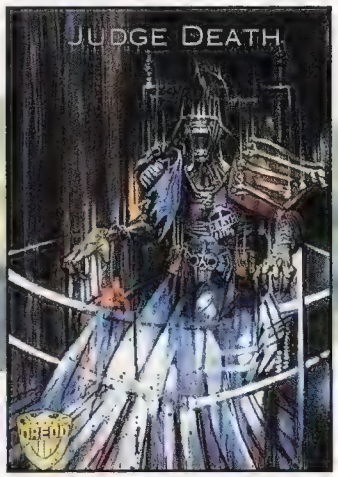

He is the law. Judge Dredd joins the card market with Edge Entertainment's Judge Dredd: The Epics.

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TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay any attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1. SPAWN

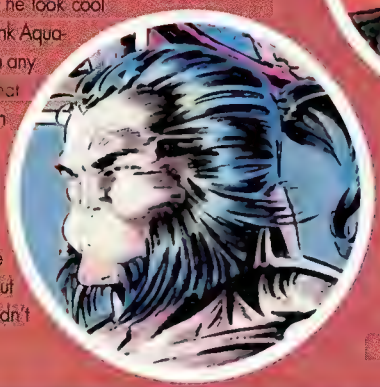
Wow! Straight out of *Return of the Jedi*: It's Darth Vader without his mask on! Oh, wait, how could I be so stupid? With that big birthmark thingie on his head, it's gotta be that Russian guy Gorbachev. No, no—just kidding. It's really just our ol' pal Spawn (like we'd ever really have a Russian superhero in the Top Ten.) But I guess if you were the number one hero every month, you wouldn't care too much what you looked like either. Anyway, Spawn continues his huge success thanks to his almost-monthly book by McFarlane, various guest appearances, a funky toy line, and the strong possibility of a feature film. Whew. There's just no slowin' down for ol' cue ball here, is there? Next thing ya know, he'll be hosting his own cooking show on late-night TV!

2. SPIDER-MAN

Head growing excessively large. Must stop eating so many...eggs. Aunt May...Mary...Jane... Yowza! Poor Spidey. Something must really be getting to his head. It looks like he was so upset that he actually put his mask on upside down again and sanded down some of the webbing on his mask for some odd reason. Silly arachnid. Anyway, this poor schnook has been through so much this past year or so, that it's a wonder he can still *spell* M.J. Let's see, you've got that recent death in the family trauma, as well as the whole Clone fiasco. And let's not forget the fact that his parents came back and then turned out to not even be his parents. That's more than enough to drive even James Earl Jones loopy.

3. WOLVERINE

Hmmph. Ummwyeah, ok, I just missed Mabremooth. Mut et muzz'n't matter, 'mause meffenthing mis mow mifferent." Uh, yeah, OK, Wolvie, whatever you say. And didn't Mama Logan ever teach you that it's damn rude to speak with your mouth full? Well, Wolvie here (doing the best blowfish impression I've ever seen) is as popular as ever, thanks to his important role in the current X-Men time-flip universe. (And doesn't he look cool with only one hand? I still think Aquaman can out-arm-wrestle him any day, though.) But the fact that he finally offed Sabretooth right before the timeflip, has just gotta give him the thumbs up with his fan. Of course that really doesn't matter, now that the whole X-Universe has changed. But Wolvie just told us that, didn't he? "Mmph hmmph!"



4. GAMBIT

OK. A little wider now. Come on, I know you can do better than that. Well, looks like you're not gonna need one o' them root canals after all, but I do see a nasty cavity. You haven't been brushing, Mr. LeBeau, have you? Even after I told you about that gingivitis problem and everything. Sheesh! At least have the decency to brush your teeth after chowin' down on alla that gumbo! And having to go save the universe is no excuse! Sigh. Anyway, our resident ragin' Cajun continues to be a bright with all the hadies, and for good reason. He's just sooo cool! And his recent appearance in Rogue's mini-series has helped to keep 'im in the spotlight. Besides, who else do ya know that can throw an Ace of Spades like 500 yards and have it blow up in someone else's face?

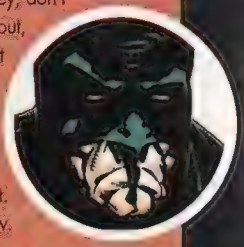
Spider-Man, Wolverine, and Gambit ™ & © Marvel Entertainment Group. Spawn is a registered trademark of Todd McFarlane Productions Inc. Spawn © Todd McFarlane Productions Inc.

5. ANGELA

Hey, what's *she* so happy about? It's not like she's got her own comic or anything. Maybe she just gave McFarlane a superwedgie or something. Oh yeah, well, she did just star in her own three-issue mini-series, where she went through Hell, literally. And, yeah, she *is* pretty good to look at (and she's a redhead! Mwrrrooow!). So, I guess she's got every right to be happy. But is that enough to make her worthy of a Top Ten list? Well, throw in the fact that she's always sniffin' up trouble for that mega-popular superdude Spawn, plus the writing talents of a certain Mr. Neil Gaiman (who's always wowing those Vertigo fans with *Sandman*), and *boom*, you've got yerself a fan favorite.

6. BATMAN

Now isn't that just the saddest little puss you ever laid eyes on? C'mon, Batty, lighten up. You've got a new costume now, and you've got a new movie coming out soon. Oh, *that's* it. You're still sore about that Val Kilmer guy replacing Keaton. Hey, don't sweat it, man. If Kilmer can play a drugged out, over-the-edge Jim Morrison with no shirt and tight pants, then heck, he can easily portray a psychotic vigilante with big ears, who wears black tights, and is haunted by his parents' murder. Besides, you've been a fan favorite for years! And stop milkin' that whole Bane/Azrael incident. We're pretty much sick of your whining by now.



7. PITT

Hey, looks like Pitt and Conan the Barbarian share the same barber. Gosh, what's that gotta be like? "By Crom, you will cut my hair first, swarthy haircutter guy." "Pitt here first, barbarian!" "What mean this word 'barbarian'?" "GGRRRR. It means you're a moron. Now get out of Pitt's way before I run you through with your own sword!" Anyway, in case you haven't heard of Pitt, that's probably 'cause his book comes out once every millennium. But that (and all his guest app's) seems to be enough to keep this no-nonsense, no-nosed guy on the charts. Now, if only Pitt, himself, would go bust Mr. Keown's kneecaps, maybe we could read about him a little more often.

8. LADY DEATH

"And we'll have fun, fun, fun till her daddy takes her T-Bird awaaaaaay..." Ya think Lady Death here could use some sunblock? Maybe like an SPF 4,000,000 or so. And do you think her shades are those cool sunglasses which let you see things behind you? That'd be neat! Then she can keep an eye on that Satan guy, while she's trying to enjoy a good ball game on TV. (Though I've heard her favorite TV show is really *What's Happening*. "That Rerun, he's just so funny!") Well, it's no mystery why this babe's so hot. Her appearances all over the place in Evil Ernie's mini-series, as well as her own new mini-series, *Lady Death: Between Heaven & Hell*, just keep giving the fans what they want. And they want Death!

9. SUPERMAN

Oh my God! Someone thinks Superman is one o' them Stretch Armstrong™ dolls! They better not start yanking at some other body parts of his, or else the ol' Man of Steel'll just have to learn 'em a lesson or two. Anyway, the Big S has always been a pretty popular bloke, and the recent chaos he's been through hasn't hurt his popularity any. And he finally found out that Brainiac was behind the whole second Supes thing. (How lame was that?!? Brainy used a worldwide hallucination to make people think there was a body in Superman's tomb. What was he thinking, that the comic public itself was under the same hallucination? Hoo boy.)

10. SHI

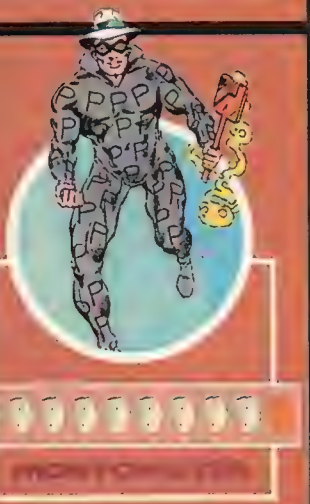
If Shi ever leaves the assassin biz, she can easily get a job painting those drama-type masks you find in those artsy-fartsy stores. You know, the kind that usually come in twos with one smiling and the other frowning. Or she can just go stand against a wall, frozen. That way, people'd think she was one o' them masks herself! Anyway, Bill Tucci's Shi rounds out this month's list. And for good reason. Besides having some awesome art in her book, there's also some fine writing. *Shi* tells the tale of Ana Ishikawa—a skilled ninja assassin—and her struggles against the very, very bad man, Arashi. So, any way you slice it (groan), *Shi* is just pure excitement. ☆

MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

KNODAR

Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha, ha ha. Oh, sorry, but just look at this freak! He looks like a Riddler reject! And what's that he's carrying, a waffle iron? Anyway, this here mort comes from the 25th century on DC's Earth-2 (Don't ask!), where science was so far advanced that there was absolutely no criminal activity whatsoever. Along came Knodar, who gained his criminal interest thanks to a bunch of old-fashioned gangster movies. But after he started thieving, he was captured, forced to wear the ugliest outfit this side of the universe (complete with plenty of "P's," so everyone'd know he was a prisoner), and put on display like some sideshow freak! As with all of DC's characters, Knodar soon built himself a time-travel device and headed back to the 20th century, where he fit in with the rest of the criminal lot. Now, ain't that just the stupidest thing you've ever heard? If that's what the future's got in store for us, then I'll be glad to live in the past!



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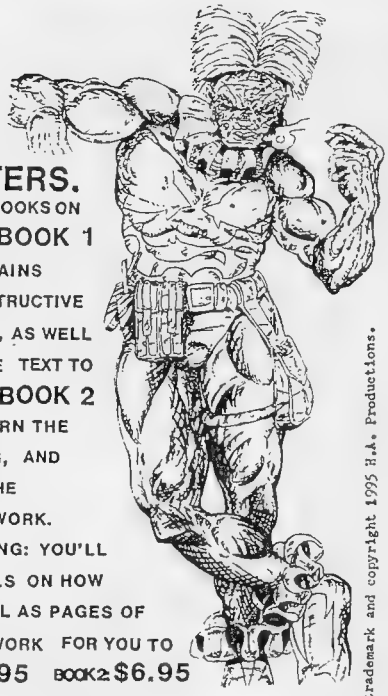

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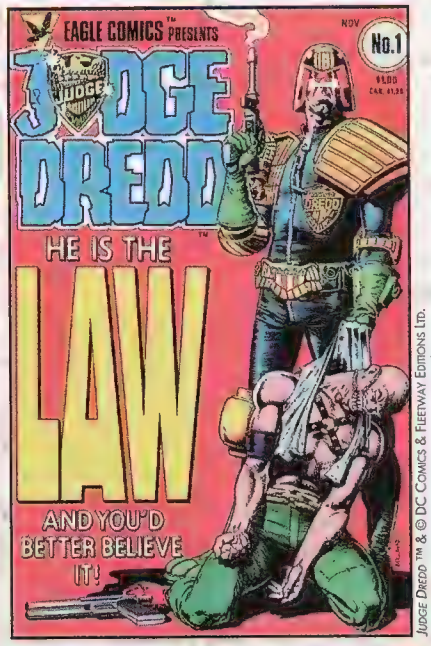


JUDGE DREDD™ & © DC COMICS & FLEETWAY EDITIONS LTD.

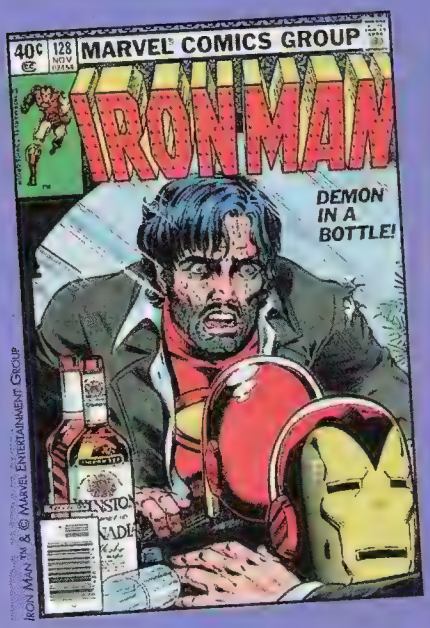
Judge Dredd #1

Writer: ***John Wagner***
Artist: ***Brian Bolland***
Publisher: ***Eagle Comics***
Release date: ***November 1983***

"Even death is no escape from the law!" orates Mega-City One's chief protector, the vicious Judge Dredd, in his first issue. He has just slaughtered a blackmailer with one of his handy homing bullets, and has placed the creep in suspended animation until the wound can be cured and the criminal can live out his sentence. That's just a taste of the harshness of Dredd's title, set in an apocalyptic future where the world's made up of giant, overcrowded, lawless cities surrounded by a mutant-filled wasteland (hey, just like the Marvel Universe!). *Judge Dredd* first appeared on U.S. stands in 1983 thanks to London's Eagle Comics (he actually started blastin' baddies in 1977's *2000 A.D.* #2, which only shipped around England and is impossible to find—*anywhere*), and since his American intro, the lawman's "graced" several books, including Fleetway/Quality's 1986-91 series, and numerous graphic (and we're talkin' *graphic*) novels (two being crossovers with Batman). Nowadays, he's passing rough sentences—including death—to lawbreakers in DC's *Judge Dredd* and *Legends of the Law*, and this summer heralds a big-screen movie for the Judge/Jury/Executioner/Anthrax mascot, starring Sly Stallone! The hype over this flick should drive hordes of collectors towards all that is Dredd, making this first ish—which has Brian Bolland art!—very watchable. ☆

good & cheap

by Mike Searle



IRON MAN™ & © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Iron Man #128

Writer: ***David Michelinie (with Bob Layton co-plotting)***
Artists: ***John Romita Jr. and Bob Layton***
Current Value: ***$5.50***

Sure, *Iron Man* #128 has one o' the best tandems to ever draw ol' Shellhead—John Romita Jr. and Bob Layton—but that's not the best part, which is the story by David Michelinie and Layton. And what a story, in the now-famous "Demon in a Bottle" alcoholism issue, as Tony Stark battles his toughest foe of all time—himself! Wracked by the problems in his personal life, Tony retreats into a bottle of whiskey, which spirals him further and further into depression.

Besides demolishing his personal life, Tony fouls things up as a drunk Iron Man when, faculties out of control, he destroys more things than the U.S. Treasury could safely account for (discounting himself, of course), the worst being a tanker full of poisonous gas (whoops!). Finally, almost over the edge with despair, he turns to his lover and friend, Bethany Cabe, to try and guide him out of his troubles.

It's a straight-to-the-heart tale of the pressures and strain of being a superhero, and what it truly takes for any person to be a hero.

Oh, and if you don't want to end up lookin' like our man Stark on the cover, listen to all those public service announcements. ☆

PICKS FROM THE WIZARD'S HAT

HERE'S A LISTING OF THE HOTTEST BOOKS, AS SELECTED BY THE *WIZARD* STAFF, SHIPPING IN MARCH!

Gen[13] #1

Writers: ***Brandon Choi & J. Scott Campbell***
Artists: ***J. Scott Campbell & Alex Garner***
Release Date: ***March***
Cover Price: ***$2.95***

MARVEL Now that the pals and gals of Gen[13] have survived their first big mini-series, things slow down for a while, right? Readers might believe that from the opening pages of the new ongoing title, admits editor Tom Harrington. "The first half [of #1] is real character-driven and focuses on them adjusting to life in La Jolla, Calif.," he says, "but that changes in the second half. I don't want to give away too much too soon, but I've seen the designs for things coming up, and I can tell you you're going to be seeing some wild stuff."

You can tell us more than that, can't you? We won't tell more than a few hundred thousand readers, honest! After "one of the best opening scenes I've ever seen in a comic," he finally reveals, the team finds that living together isn't quite so idyllic. Things heat up more when Freefall heads out for a night on the town and becomes easy prey for visitors from another dimension! These critters are the first of a herd of "weird and sensational looking characters" from the minds of Choi, Campbell, and WildStorm founder Jim Lee.

Harrington promises that new readers won't have to scour the stands for that scarce mini-series to figure out what's happening in the lives of Burnout, Fairchild, Freefall, Grunge, and Rainmaker. Nor will they find the industry's typical grim 'n' gritty approach. "*Gen[13]* was a hit because the characters are young, light-hearted, free-spirited guys, as opposed to the usual angry, vengeful superheroes," he notes. "We're going to continue to follow that approach."

Any other hints you can drop? "There are still a few threads left hanging from the mini-series," he points out. "Sooner or later, those will have to create some problems for the team."

—Craig Shutt

Gen[13] ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA Wildstorm Productions

"Birthquake"

X-O Manowar ™ & © Voyager Communications Inc.

Writers: *Various*
Artists: *Various*
Release Date: *March*
Cover Prices: *$2.25-$2.50*

ACCLAIM/VALIANT "'Birthquake' isn't a crossover," says editor Jesse "Hurricane" Berdinka about the dramatic new approach to Acclaim Comics's Valiant line coming this month. "It's a new philosophy of how we're doing our books from now on." Valiant's 18 existing titles will be pared down to 10, with eight of those running twice a month. In addition, the company has signed some of the industry's hottest creators to steer the course for those titles, alternating creative teams to keep the heroes' adventures coming at you.

The eight bi-weekly books are *Bloodshot* (with rotating art by Norm Breyfogle and Sean Chen), *Eternal Warrior* (with rotating art by Jackson Guice and Stefano Raffaele), *Magnus: Robot Fighter* (with rotating art by Andrew Currie and Kevin Kobasic), *Ninjak* (with rotating art by Mike Manley and Luke Ross), *Timewalker* (with art by Don Perlin and Gonzalo Mayo, and stories by top science fiction writers, including Susan Wright), *Turok* (with rotating art by Paul Gulacy and Rags Morales), *The Visitor* (with rotating art by Bernard Chang and John Ross), and *X-O Manowar* (with rotating art by Bart Sears and Andy Smith). *Solar, Man of the Atom* (by Dan Jurgens), and *Shadowman* (by Bob Hall) continue their monthly schedules. (See this issue's Birthquake article on page 50 to find out more!)

So check 'em out as it all begins this month! —CS

"The Death of Clark Kent"

Writers: *Various*
Artists: *Various*
Release Dates: *March & April*
Cover Prices: *Various*

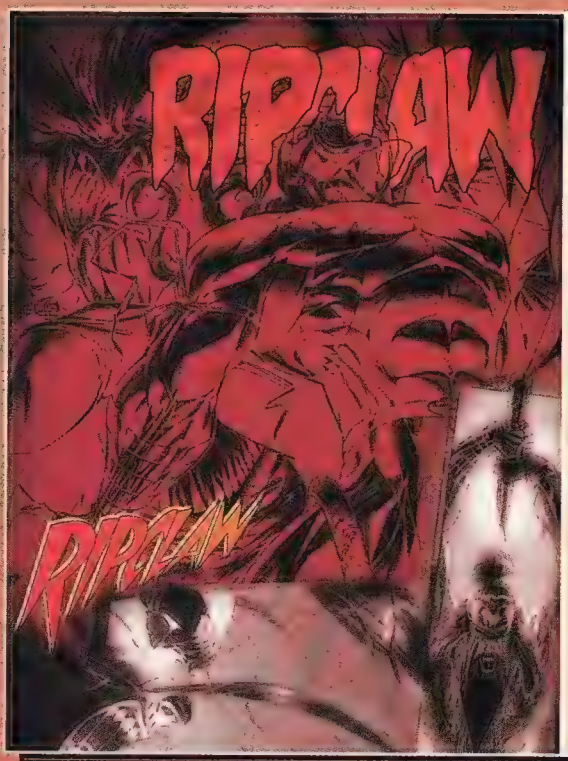
DC COMICS Hey, didn't he die already? "None of us has said the premise or title is the most original idea ever," laughs Mike Carlin, editor of all four Superman titles. "But we do think we have a unique perspective on the concept, and we have the advantage of four titles that can explore in depth what it means."

The troubles begin in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #44, which offers a prologue to the seven-part story. Threats are made to Kent's friends and family, making it clear that someone knows Superman's foremost secret. It all explodes the next week in a 64-page *Superman* #100. Explains writer/penciler Dan Jurgens, "We're putting Clark into circumstances where he has to decide what his obligations are to those closest to him, rather than what Superman's obligations are to the world."

The story will then flow through this month's *Adventures of Superman* #523 and *Action Comics* #710, and next month's *Man of Steel* #45, *Superman* #101, *Adventures* #524, and *Action* #711. The team hopes to generate the same reader enthusiasm that brought much acclaim for the "Reign of the Supermen" arc. "We know how a roller coaster ride ends, but we still get on it," Carlin says. "When we're done, he may still be Clark, he may still be Superman, he may be only one. We hope it's going to be a fun story watching it happen." —CS

Superman ™ & © DC Comics

Ripclaw #1



RIPCLAW™ & © TOP COW PRODUCTIONS

Writer: ***Eric Silvestri***
Artists: ***Brandon Peterson & Al Vey***
Release Date: ***March***
Cover Price: ***$2.50***

IMAGE Ripclaw kicks off his first mini-series by learning more about his Native American roots. "This story will introduce many new characters that Ripclaw's dealt with before, but we didn't know about it," explains editor David Wohl. Included will be his former girlfriend and a number of old friends. His relationship with the grandfather figure introduced in *Wizard*'s exclusive #1/2 issue also deepens.

The story revolves around an invading demon who is trying to turn everyone in New York into demons (like that would take much effort). In trying to stop that process, Ripclaw will also have to deal with a bunch of Cyberdata S.H.O.C. troops, including Killjoy and Buzzcut. He'll also run up against the even more deadly Shadowblade, who works on Ripclaw's reservation while also secretly being employed by Cyberdata. That evil group is trying to tap into new power sources, including the mystical energy its members discover on the reservation.

The first of a four-parter, this issue makes a good jumping-on point for readers eager to learn more about this popular member of Cyberforce. "This series will show a lot about why Ripclaw is the way he is," Wohl promises. It also leads into a one-shot special penciled by Jordan Raskin, which will flow into a regular ongoing series later. —CS

Magic: The Gathering

Writer: ***Jeff Gómez***
Artists: ***Val Mayerik & Rafael Kayanan***
Release Date: ***March***
Cover Price: ***$2.50***

ACCLAIM/VALIANT Acclaim is working closely with Wizards of the Coast to ensure that its two new overlapping *Magic: The Gathering* mini-series from its Armada imprint remain as faithful to the popular card game as possible. That means that card fans will be snatching up these comics faster than you can tap your mana (oh, boy—*Magic* humor).

The connections will be apparent from the first page of *Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Masters*, says writer Jeff Gómez. It opens with "a spectacular duel that reads just like a duel in the card game: Spells fly back and forth during a huge, epic battle with thousands of soldiers, flying fortresses, the works." The story centers on Jared Carthalion, whose father is killed by the evil Ravidel during the battle. The series follows Jared into his teenage years as he learns to use his enormous powers, prepares to battle Ravidel, and learns that his father was no angel, himself. Art is supplied by Val Mayerik.

Magic: The Gathering—Ice Age, coming two weeks later, will be an anthology title featuring art by *Conan the Adventurer*'s Rafael Kayanan. Each of the four parts tells a tale from a different era in this period of Dominia's history, including stories of the Carthalion family. The series ties into the *Ice Age* expansion deck to be released this summer. "Fans won't need to collect both series," says Gómez, "but those who do will have fun picking up hints that tie them together." —CS

© ACCLAIM COMICS. MAGIC: THE GATHERING™ & © WIZARDS OF THE COAST.

MORE PICKS

The following pages list the peachiest titles shipping in March, as selected and written by the *Wizard* staff. Books marked with a check ✓ sign are comics that should not be overlooked on the often-cramped comic shelf.

Agents of Law #1

DARK HORSE With Titan gone and Grace missing, the people of Golden City need a new leader. That's where this new bud named Law comes in. He promises to make things right, but demands absolute authority over everyone and everything. By Keith Giffen, Lovern Kindzierski, Dan Lawlis, and Ian Akin. **$2.50**

Ash #3

EVENT Our resident hero escapes from a bunch o' soldiers, only to be troubled by recurring dreams that may just contain the key to his superhero identity. And speaking of identities, Ashley reveals his superheroness to one of his best friends. Now how does that come up in conversation? "Wow, what a great Knicks game. Oh, by the way, I can do neat things like blast gunk out of my hands and stuff." Yeah, that'd go over big. By Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.50**

Badrock #1

IMAGE The big rockhead starts off the first issue of his regular series deep in the bowels of Chicago. No, he's not watching the Bears lose yet another playoff game. Actually, he's hot in pursuit of the Overlord and the Vicious Circle, who kidnapped his father (Is that called "parentnapped," then?). Oh, and by the way—do ya think the Vicious Circle is any nastier than the Unruly Parallelogram? By Rob Liefeld and Eric Stephenson. **$1.75**

Batman Books

DC COMICS In *Batman* #518, that vicious bad guy, the Black Spider (second cousin to the Scarlet Spider), goes on a nasty killing spree in Gotham until he comes ear-to-ear with the Batdude. Laugh yourself silly in *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #38, as the Clown Prince of Crime makes a visit. It seems a few years ago, a bunch of people didn't take too kindly to the Joker's sense of humor. Now, ol' laughing boy turns the joke on them, as they're forced to laugh themselves to death while imprisoned in an abandoned mansion. Skulk over to *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* #71 for "Werewolf," Part 1 (of 3). After two Wayne employees are killed, the Caped Crusader heads to the British underworld (that's in London, silly), where he comes snout-to-snout with a character of the lupine variety. And to round out your Dark Knight cravings, check out *Detective Comics* #685, where the gangs in Gotham's Chinatown go at each other and just might bring all of Gotham down as well, so Batman steps in to learn these kids a lesson but good. **$1.50—*BATMAN, DETECTIVE*; $1.95—*B:SOTB, B:LOTDK***

© DC Comics

The Endless Gallery

© Malibu

Firearm #18

Cyberforce #12

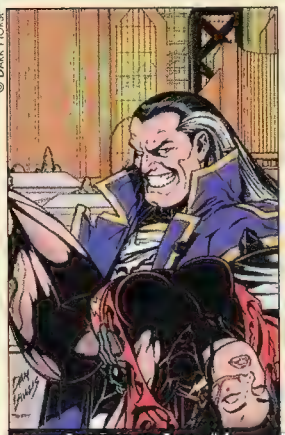
IMAGE After the team meets up with Cyberdata, some much larger plans are revealed. Get the skinny on Cyberforce as well as Cyberdata's ultimate nefarious plans. And just where does Cyberdata get all that wacky technology and stuff? Also, witness T.I.M.M.I.E. go ballistic! Cool! Cyberfun brought your way by Los Bros. Silvestri. (That's Eric and Marc.) **$1.95**

The Endless Gallery

VERTIGO/DC First, ol' Dreamy gets his own gallery. Then that babelicious Death chick gets hers. And now the whole family gets a gallery. Hey, are you tellin' me Destiny ain't good enough for his own gallery? Ya mean he's gotta share it with the rest o' the family? Ah well. This ish is chock full of various artists' interpretations of Vertigo's favorite family, featuring art by Greg Capullo, Howard Chaykin, Tom Taggart, Jill Thompson, and a whole bunch more. **$3.50**

✓ Firearm #18

MALIBU It's the conclusion to "The Rafferty Saga," as Alec Swan and Rafferty duel to the death for the very life of a child who could be the most powerful ultra ever. Guest stars galore drop in to join the fray, including the Strangers, Prime, and the Night Man. By James Robinson and Brian O'Connell. Robinson says of the ish, "It's my farewell to Firearm for the time being. And I think I give him a decent send-off. It's the big climax to 'The Rafferty Saga,' full of action, and there is the strong possibility that Swan won't be alive at the end for any future adventures. Or maybe not." **$2.50**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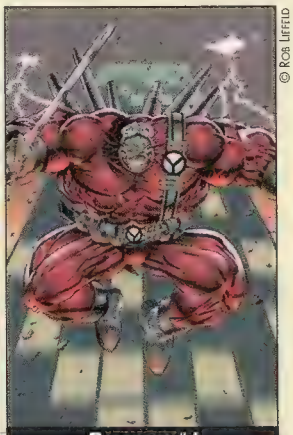
Agents of Law #1


© Rob Liefeld

Badrock #1

MORE PICKS

© Rob Liefeld

Glory #1

© Dark Horse

Grendel Tales: Devil's Choices #1

✓ Flash #101

DC COMICS Now that "Terminal Velocity" is over, will the Flash be slowin' down? Fat chance! This ish, the new and improved speedster must learn to deal with some high-powered abilities that no speedmaster has ever handled before, as the Flash runs to the task of rebuilding a city in ruins. By Mark Waid, Oscar Jimenez, and Jose Marzan Jr. **$1.50**

Glory #1

IMAGE In her glorious (heh) first issue, Glory must act like a shy schoolgirl and brush off the advances of some sicko who's been possessed by a demon. Now, where did this so-called demon come from you ask? (Go on, ask!) Well, it was somehow released from an ancient book of demonic love spells. That was your first guess, right? By Jo Duffy and Mike Deodato Jr. **$2.50**

Grendel Tales: Devil's Choices #1 (of 4)

DARK HORSE This series, picking up 10 years after the recent Devils and Deaths tale, sees the Agram clan involved in a confusing all-out war. Goran is now the finest—and most disobedient—soldier in his group. It's a tale chock full of love, hate, death, mirth, and birth. Just like a Disney movie! By a pair o' talented fellas, Darko Macan and Edvin Biukovic. For mature readers. **$2.95**

✓ Green Lantern #62

DC COMICS Kyle may be late for a very important date (With Darkstar! Go, Kyle! Go, Kyle! Go, Kyle!), thanks to the new pair of bad guys known as Duality. Plus, Ganthet returns with some bad news for Kyle—his ring's warranty is apparently up. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks, and Romeo Tanghal. Marz says, "I think the most important aspect is that Ganthet returns to Kyle's life. In addition to Ganthet's return, somebody else important to the Green Lantern mythos makes an unexpected appearance. It was nice to have an opportunity to do some real character stuff between Donna and Kyle. And, as the issue continues, things really heat up in terms of Kyle's role as Green Lantern. This issue begins a storyline in which we decide Kyle's future as Green Lantern—actually, we'll decide if Kyle has a future." **$1.50**

Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor #1

DARK HORSE This new ongoing series starts off with the beginning of John Byrne's adaptation of Harlan Ellison's "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream." This issue also features Diana Schutz's adaptation of "Knox" with Teddy Kristiansen; Max Allan Collins adapting "Turnpike" with Craig Elliot; and a framing sequence by Ellison himself, with art by Eric Shanower. Dare to dream. For mature readers, OK? **$2.95**

Icon #25

MILESTONE/DC Hey, congrats are in order to Rocket, who's now a new mother. Oh, yeah, and Icon fights for the Earth in an interstellar court, where he must tell of his experiences throughout Earth's history. Plus, the new Icon and Rocket take on the alien shapeshifter Oblivion. You know, the guy responsible for stranding the original Icon on our planet. The jerk. By Dwayne McDuffie, M.D. Bright, and Mike Gustovich. **$2.95**

Impulse #2

DC COMICS It's the guy who's raced right into your heart. Yes, it's Impulse. This issue, the li'l speed freak puts it into turbo gear as he tackles some technological terrorists. (Try saying that three times fast with a mouth full of marbles!) His impulsive behavior (Get it?) could be his downfall, however, when his enemy reveals some pretty high-tech weapons. By Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos, and Faucher. **$1.50**

✓ Incredible Hulk #429

MARVEL This issue sees the Hulk and Betty (Wotta woman!) tackle one of the toughest foes they've ever faced: an angry mob that's after a young woman planning on getting an abortion. Some serious stuff from Peter David, Liam Sharp, and Robin Riggs. David says, "In this particular case, I decided to focus on the fascinating dichotomy of people who are rabidly pro-life, so much so that they'll kill in order to enforce it. When you're dealing with an issue of this sort, the trap that you do not want to fall into is having the characters stand around pontificating about pros and cons and valid choices or not choices. You want to—bottom line—still provide an entertaining story. On the one hand you've got the fairly serious, torn-from-the-headlines-type concept of an abortion clinic under siege. On the other hand you've got the comic-like, bigger-than-life aspect of the

© Marvel

Incredible Hulk #429

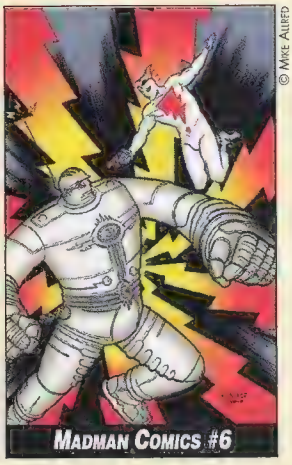
© DC Comics

Jonah Hex: ROTWAS #3

MORE PICKS

© Brian Pulido

Lady Death II: BHAH #2


© Mike Allred

Madman Comics #6

Hulk slugging it out with the town sheriff, who it quickly becomes clear is more than he appears to be." **$1.95 (DELUXE ONLY)**

Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm & Such #3 (of 5)
VERTIGO/DC Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of some big, friggin' worms! That's just what Hex does this issue, when he learns the truth behind the singing cowboys' Oscar Wilde-inspired ranch and the giant grubs! And if you cut one o' them giant worms in half, will both halves grow new halves again? That'd be really sick! By Joe R. Lansdale, Timothy Truman, and Sam Glanzman. For the mature reader type. **$2.95**

Lady Death II: Between Heaven and Hell #2 (of 4)
CHAOS! COMICS Have you ever just lost control of something and had all Hell just break loose? Well, that's just what happens to Lady Death this month, when the Endless Graveyard is no longer under her control, and she's forced to suffer through a reliving of the nastiest moments of her former life as Hope. Plus, Purgatori stirs up a whole heap o' trouble! By Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes. **$2.75**

✓ **Legend of Supreme #4**
IMAGE Ya know, this planet must be pretty bad for ol' Supremie to leave it again! Anyway, at a Cosmic Truck Stop (where they've probably got more prune danishes and country music than you can stomach), Supreme ends up killing Bloodwulf's aunt. So you just know there's gonna be some friction between those two! By Keith Giffen, Robert Loren Fleming, Jeff Johnson, and Dan Panosian. Giffen says, "At the end of the first three issues, you are never going to be able to look at the Supreme characters the same way again. That is ironside, A-1 guaranteed. Issue #4, is a complete, absolute, 100 percent change of pace. Number four will be played for the gut-level belly laugh, as we bring Bloodwulf into it, and show that you can go from the kind of horror story that we were weaving in the first three, and just pull the rug out from under the readers. Never get comfortable." **$2.50**

Lobo's Big Babe Spring Break Special
DC COMICS It's the dream job of the century! Lobo's hired as security for the Miss Voluptua Contest. But with the Anti-Sex League, a robot death squad, and some pretty ticked-off feminists all causin' trouble, Lobo may have grabbed more than even he can handle. Ya just know this issue's gotta have plenty of bazoombas and downright offensive stuff! Yeah! By Alan Grant and Jim Balent. **$1.95**

✓ **Madman Comics #6**
LEGEND/DARK HORSE Madman faces his biggest foe yet, when he goes up against Frank Miller and Geof Darrow! Oh, wait, that's really Miller and Darrow's creation, the Big Guy! Yeah, that's probably a pretty good battle, too. It seems the U.S. government has sent the Big Guy after Dr. Boiffard—whose head is now so friggin' huge, he probably knows more useless facts than Alex Trebek—and it's up to our pal Madman to stop him! By Mike Allred, with some funky assistance by Frank Miller. Allred says of the ish, "It's a Legend slumber party. This is the first of a two part team-up with the Big Guy, created by Frank Miller and Geof Darrow. Geof and I have done the covers together on the sixth issue. I designed it, and he drew the Big Guy. On the seventh issue cover, he designed it, and I drew Madman. And for both issues, Frank Miller is writing all the dialogue for the Big Guy, and it's killer. It's the Big Guy's official debut in comics. I've never enjoyed doing a comic book as much as I did." **$2.95**

The Mask #2
DARK HORSE "The Mask Strikes Back," Part 2 (of 5). With the sudden reappearance of ol' "Big-Head" (I guess that's a better name for the guy than The Mask) causes a bit of a panic. Rick, the current Mask holder, tussles with The Mask's bitter enemy, Walter! (Oooooh, scary name!) Lotsa goofy, wacky stuff brought yer way by John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke, and Keith Williams. **$2.50**

Nexus: Wages of Sin #1 (of 4)
DARK HORSE Vootie! Baron and the Dude return to their mass-murdering superhero! This issue, Nexus is asked to help a young girl exact revenge on some pirates who killed her family. Nexus must weigh the balance of doing good against killing someone. Plus, get a guided tour of Ylum, Nexus's homeworld. By Mike Baron and Steve Rude. **$2.95**

✓ **Outsiders #18**
DC COMICS "Sins of the Father," Part 1 (of 2). The Out-

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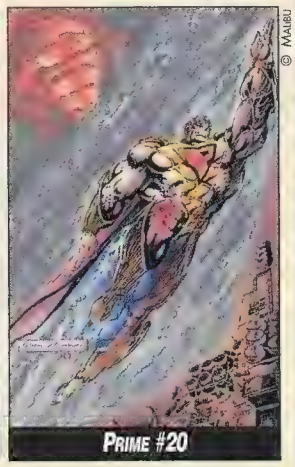
Nexus: Wages of Sin #1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Prime #20

MORE PICKS

siders fight Felix Faust for Faust's very life and soul, but when someone betrays them, the cost is pretty high. Also, learn the younger Faust's origin. (Hey, do ya think the gang can still take on the Socs?) By Mike Barr, Paul Pelletier, and Robert Campanella. **$1.95**

Prime #20

MALIBU Finally! Kevin tells Kelly about his dual persona, but Rafferty just might interrupt this Kodak™ moment before it's over. It's tough enough being a teenager and askin' out chicks and stuff, so imagine how sweaty Kevin's hands have gotta be when he tells Kelly that he's really Prime! We're talkin' Perspiration City here, folks! By Gerard Jones, Len Strazewski, and Greg Luzniak. **$2.50**

The Savage Dragon #18

IMAGE It's the return of the Friend. Aww, that'll be nice. She and the Dragon can play together and...oh, sorry. That's the return of the *Fiend*. Silly me. Anyway, the Fiend gives Mrs. Harris the power to destroy the Dragon. Now why would she want to do that? Could be that Mrs. Harris's daughter was killed in the Dragon's apartment a year ago? Of course, I'm only guessing. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

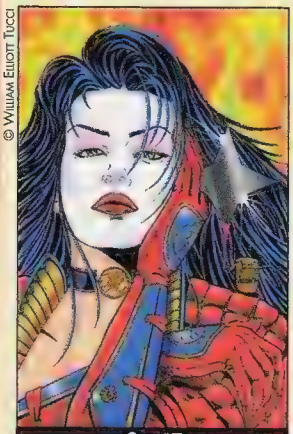
Shi #7

CRUSADE COMICS Uh-oh, I smell trouble. Pyew. Arashi sets loose the Nara warriors, who go on a killing spree throughout the city, leaving Shi's symbol all over the crime scenes. It's all a part of Arashi's plan to gain control of Shi herself, who enters the fray, only to come face-to-face with Tomoe (who just happens to be pretty darn deadly herself, as well as one of Shi's closest friends). By William Tucci, Jimmy Palmiotti, Peter Gutierrez, and Nelson Asencio. **$2.50**

✓ Sin City: The Big Fat Kill #5 (of 5)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE It's the big fat conclusion to the newest Sin City tale. This ish, the mob and the cops are trying to control Old Town, but no one can come up with any sort of agreement. Needless to say, the ladies of Old Town are far from happy. Solution? Enter one Dwight and plenty o' bullets! Sin-tillating excitement from the Man of the Year, Frank Miller. For mature readers, pal. **$2.95**

© William Elliott Tucci



Shi #7

Star Wars: Dark Empire II #4

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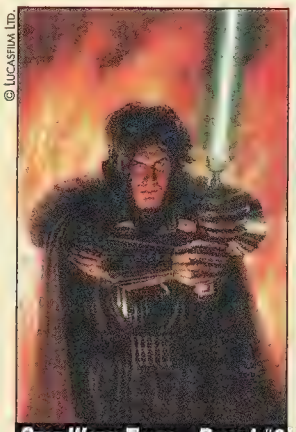

Star Wars: Tales... Book I #6

Star Wars: Jabba the Hutt

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Spawn #30

IMAGE Spawn's journey back to New York hits a weird turn when he finally makes it home: he bumps into the Ku Klux Klan. What's intriguing is that they try to recruit Spawn into their group. Hmmm...them Klan boys ain't too bright, are they? By Todd McFarlane and Greg Capullo. **$1.95**

The Spectre #29

DC COMICS It's more trouble from that Azmodus guy. He and the Spectre hit the town for a fun-filled evening of bowling, dining, and dancing. That Corrigan is pretty light on his feet, ya know. Anyway, despair and self-doubt might just be the cause of the Spectre's downfall. (But if he's gone, then who's gonna dance with Azmodus?) By John Ostrander and Tom Mandrake. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books

MARVEL Check out *Web of Spider-Man* #124 for "The Mark of Kaine," Part 1 (of 5). When Kaine kidnaps Mary Jane, what will the Scarlet Spider (ugh) do? Peter, however, can't do anything, 'cause he's locked in jail after being arrested for murder! Then jump on over to *Amazing Spider-Man* #401 for Part 2, where Peter sneaks out of prison to save MJ. Will the Scarlet Spider drag Pete's sorry butt back to jail, or will we be forced to witness more of this charade? To find out, crawl over to *Spider-Man* #58 for Part 3, where the ughster and ol' Web-Head team-up to take down Kaine. Plus, learn the secret behind the third Peter Parker. (He's really Uncle Ben!) After that, read *Spectacular Spider-Man* #224 for Part 4 of the whole shebang. The truth about Kaine is revealed, as is the fate of Pete's prison sentence. And for the finale to "The Mark of Kaine," blast yer brains with *Spider-Man Unlimited* #9. Kaine is going after all of Spidey's villainous foes, but they sure ain't going quietly. Also, Mary Jane learns the shocking truth of her unborn baby. (It's beginning to bear a striking resemblance to Flash Thompson! Hmm...) **$1.50—EACH; $1.95—*SPIDER-MAN*; $3.95—*SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED***

MORE PICKS

Star Wars Books

DARK HORSE Check out *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith, Book I* #6 (of 6), for the series's final chapter. Ulic Qel-Droma and Exar Kun are locked in a vicious battle to see who will survive and live on to be one of the most feared men in the entire galaxy, a Dark Lord of the Sith. My money's on Ulic, since he's got a much cooler name! Then pick up *Star Wars: Dark Empire II* #4 (of 6), where Luke finds a pretty nifty Jedi relic on Ossus, but the Emperor's Darksiders are sniffin' at the backdoor. Also, Lando Calrissian and his Rebel friends try to bring the fight to the Empire's front, by stowing away on a ship headed for the Emperor's homeworld. Hey, Lando—careful, buddy, I think the Emperor's a little smarter than that! To round out your monthly dose of the Force, there's always *Star Wars: Jabba the Hutt*. This issue pits the biggest and most grotesque creature in the universe against Garr Suppoon, who's supposedly one heck of a negotiator. Garr better be pretty smooth, though, or that immensely large tongue of Jabba's might just beat the crap out of him! **$2.50—EACH; $2.95—*SW:DARK EMPIRE II***

Superboy #15

DC COMICS "Watery Grave," Part 3 (of 3). Superboy gets a vivid lesson in justice after Stinger's alliance with the Silicon Dragons results in utter failure for the little guy's team. Failure meaning the death of one of his team's members. By Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett, and Doug Hazlewood. **$1.50**

UltraForce #6

MALIBU Is this Death Month or what?!? This time, it's one of the UltraForce members who's resting in peace (or pieces, depending on how (s)he died) as the rest of the team finishes its battle with Atalon and the Fire People. Don't miss the shocking ending! Pixx joins a convent! By Gerard Jones, George Pérez, and Al Vey. **$2.50**

Vengeance of Vampirella #12

HARRIS COMICS In this issue, Vampi helps Salem's police department track down a supernatural killer named Passion. Does she do anything else these days? By Tom Sniegoski, Kirk Van Wormer, and Joe Weems. **$2.95**

© Malibu

UltraForce #6

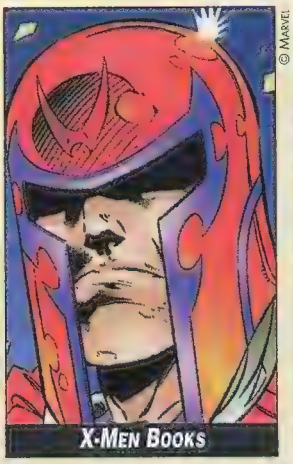
© Harris

Vengeance of Vampirella #12

© Marvel

Web of Spider-Man #124

© Marvel



X-Men Books

Weapon X #3

MARVEL Now that Jean's left Logan, he looks to Mariko for some good lovin'. The only question, though, is whether she'll betray the Human Council or not? Especially right before the no-holds-barred assault on Apocalypse! By Larry Hama, Adam Kubert, and Dan Green. **$1.95**

✓ X #13

DARK HORSE They say X marks the spot, but the spot, however, is smack dab in the middle of X's chest! Yeowch! The future of Arcadia comes into question, when X becomes the next war casualty. By Steven Grant and Javier Saltares. Grant says of the issue, "After this issue, there might not be a future for X. It's not the end of the book, but X does sort of come to a very bad way. X has everything blown out from under him. We've spent the first 11 issues setting him up as this force that couldn't be resisted, and then in #12 and #13 we've blown everything out. Everything he could possibly lose, he has pretty much lost by the end of #13. This opens the door to finding out all of the little secrets of X. We're finally getting around to that." **$2.50**

The X Files #3

TOPPS COMICS Mulder is given the chance to be reunited with his long-lost sister, when an agent offers to bring them together for a price. The price may be too high, though, considering it'll put his career and Scully's life in jeopardy. By Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard. **$2.50**

X-Men Books

MARVEL Egads, man! The whole friggin' X-Men history has mutated! Just when I finally thought I figured it all out, they go and screw around with time and stuff. Anyway, over in *The Mutants: The Astonishing X-Men* #3, Magneto must decide between saving his wife Rogue from Abyss, or learning more about that sneaky Bishop. Yeah, tough choice there, Maggie. Go with the babe! Over in *The Mutants: The Amazing X-Men* #3, the all-out attack on Apocalypse's stronghold starts, and Bishop holds the key to victory. But for whom? **$1.95 EACH**

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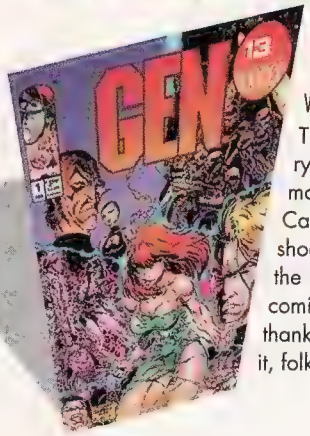
TOP TEN COMICS

Wizard, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are this month's hottest back issues.



1. GEN13 #1

WRITER: Brandon Choi ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

That's it! Nothing against *Gen13*, which happens to be a pretty good comic both artwise and storywise, but I'm honestly damn sick and tired of writing about it month after month after month after month ∞ (you get the idea). So, this month, I'll be sharing Top Ten Land with *Gen13*'s own Jeff Scott Campbell! Jeff, what do ya think about *Gen13* being on our charts for over a year? "I am incredibly shocked that it's been there that long, but I'm certainly pleased. It's funny, 'cause with the success of the mini-series, it's kind of nerve-wracking for us to try to follow that up. We've got this new series coming out, and it's like, man, the mini-series is still going strong after a year." Anyone you'd like to thank? "The people that are buying it up and making it that much of a collectible item." There you have it, folks, consider yourselves thanked!

2. SHI #1

WRITERS: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez ARTISTS: William Tucci and Harvey Mercadoocasio

Shi seems to have been on the charts for like a gazillion months as well, although our fair-faced friend has never reached that much-wanted *número uno* spot. I can just picture Bill Tucci (that guy who does all that really neat stuff with the book, like writing and drawing it), waitin' each month with his fingers crossed, prayin' that this'll be the month *Shi* makes it all the way to the top. Don't fret, Bill, it might happen. So, what does our pal Mr. Campbell think about *Shi*? "Y'know what? I'm having a tough time getting my hands on that. Maybe I'll have to wait for that trade paperback to come out. I'm certainly interested in it; I've heard a lot about the character."

3. LADY DEATH #1

WRITER: Brian Pulido
ARTIST: Steven Hughes

Well, our former #1 drops two spots this month, as the Queen of the Dead falls to the wayside of the mighty *Gen13*. Hey, I bet if writer Brian Pulido threw in a bunch of teenagers with cool powers, *Lady Death* would probably pop right back up to the top. And she should smile a little more, too. I mean, just look at that sour puss of hers. Meanwhile, Jeff has read an issue or two and thinks it's pretty cool. He also points out a pretty interesting little tidbit. "It's kind of funny that the females have the run of the Top Ten list on a regular basis—since Gen13's mainly made up of female characters, and then, of course, Shi and Lady Death. It seems like they've kind of moved into that territory for good." Wow, a conspiracy.

4. GEN13 #2

WRITERS: Brandon Choi and Jeff Mariotte
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Yeah, here's another surprise. So, what can Jeff tell us about this issue? "I can officially tell you—I don't know if you guys are aware of this—*Gen13* #2 actually did have the lowest print run out of all the issues in the series." So, rarity, great art, great story, a new regular series, and the recent release of a trade paperback, have all helped keep *Gen13* hottern' Demi Moore in *Disclosure*. And just what does Jeff think about the paperback's release? "It's funny, because looking back at the trade paperback, it's kind of retro for me. Since that was the first book I ever did, looking back at it now, I see my style progress with each issue, so it's kind of fun to watch."

Gen13 ™ & © Aegis Entertainment DBA WildStorm Productions. *Shi* ™ & © William Elliott Tucci. *Lady Death* ™ & © Brian Pulido.

5. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1

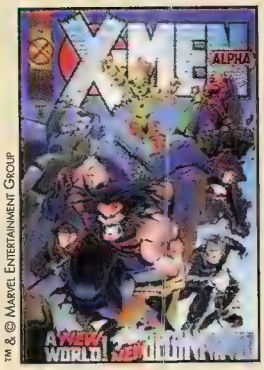
WRITER: Tom Sniegoski
ARTIST: Buzz

Yowza! Where the heck did Vampi come from? (Hey, that was a rhetorical question, you ninnies!) Yeah, she's been all over the charts in the past few months, but she wasn't even *in* the Top Ten last month, and now she's all the way up to the number five spot! Talk 'bout yer babes. Reason for her hotness? Just take a look at her, Poindexter! (Well, maybe this isn't the best picture of her. I mean it doesn't really do her justice, what with all that blood she's bathing in.) And besides having the most gorgeous body around for someone with the hugest set of fangs, as well as the fact that she likes to wear red dental floss, Vampi and ShadowHawk's recent crossover has kept fans drooling for more.

™ & © Harris Publications

6. X-MEN ALPHA #1

WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid
ARTISTS: Roger Cruz and Tim Townsend



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The only real surprise with this X-book becoming a hit (Isn't that the true mutant power of any book with an X in its name?) is that it's pretty darn good. This issue starts the Age of Apocalypse, wherein everything you've known about the X-Men is wrong (Thanks to that Legion freak!). And hey, it's even impressed that Campbell fella. "I was very interested in this whole X-Men recreating history thing, and so far, from what I've read of the first few issues, it's pretty interesting. I had a very negative slant going in, and they're pulling it off in a very cohesive and coherent way. I've been pretty impressed. Actually, I've been kind of almost jealous of how well they're doing it. More crossovers should be like this."

7. GENERATION X #1

WRITER: Scott Lobdell
ARTISTS: Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham

What d'ya think of the other Gen book, Jeff? "Going into it, I should've had one of the biggest biased attitudes. Everyone's always comparing us, since we're both youth-oriented supergroups, but I enjoy it in a way, because they're doing something totally different than what we're doing. It's probably my favorite Marvel title." But what about a crossover between the two? "You never know. Those things are hard to get approved and green-lighted, especially when it's crossing different companies. But I would certainly be open to it. I like the characters a lot. I like the writing, and the art's fantastic." Yeah, like Skin would be able to keep his epidermis offa Fairchild!

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8. GEN[13] #3

WRITER: Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Geez, what more can we say about Gen[13]? Those kids are just the cream o' the crop around here. (And if you wanna learn more about 'em, such as what they'll be up to in the future, check out the feature story on page 28.) Any final words before you take off, Jeff? "Actually, *Gen[13]* #3 was my favorite issue. I felt like I made a big jump in that issue, and the story was really fun. As far as my professional work in comic books, I kind of felt like I made a big change or jump in my ability—and hopefully my artwork—in that particular issue. I have good memories of that issue."

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9. LADY DEATH #2

WRITER: Brian Pulido
ARTIST: Steven Hughes

™ & © Brian Pulido

Before jumping into Lady Death (and who wouldn't want to do that?), I'd just like to extend a big thank you to J. Scott Campbell for his help with this month's Top Ten. Thanks, Jeff! And if life really was a box o' choclits, you'd be one o' those li'l round ones with the creamy nougat center! Now, back to our show. We've got another reappearance here of a past favorite (This must be retro month!) as the second issue of *Lady Death* reenters the charts. This bodaciously buxom bad girl is just popping up (and out) of everything. Besides helping out Evil Ernie in his various mini-series, she's running rampant in her own. No wonder she's in such good shape.

10. SHI #2

WRITER: William Tucci
ARTIST: William Tucci

Continuing our "retro" month, *Shi* #2 weasels its way back into the charts. If you didn't know by now (and if you didn't, you obviously haven't been reading this column on a regular basis. Shame on you!), Shi tells the intelligent tale of Ana Ishikawa, a good-lookin' master of the martial arts (Aren't they all?), who runs through all the bad guys with that great set of swords o' hers. This issue is exceptionally cool, due to the fact that she pulls a Highlander, and slices this bad guy's head clean off and then proceeds to use his blood to draw her symbol for death on the wall. Plenty o' fun for the whole family! ☆

™ & © William Elliott Tucci

TOP 100

Here's the list for FEBRUARY...
a countdown of the most-ordered titles as reported by Diamond Comic Distributors Inc.

(CE=Collector's Edition)

what was hOt 1 yeAr ago...

1. X-Men #31 (Marvel)
2. Uncanny X-Men #311 (Marvel)
3. Amazing Spider-Man #388 CE (Marvel)
4. Pitt #3 (Image)
5. Wolverine #80 (Marvel)
6. WildC.A.T.s #6 (Image)
7. X-Men 2099 #9 (Marvel)
8. X-Force #33 (Marvel)
9. Superman #88 (DC)
10. Adventures of Superman #511 (DC)

2 yeArs ago...

1. StormWatch #1 (Image)
2. Spawn #10 (Image)
3. Darker Image #2 (Image)
4. Rai & The Future Force #9 (Valiant)
5. Pitt #4 (Image)
6. Venom #3 (Marvel)
7. X-Men #19 (Marvel)
8. Uncanny X-Men #299 (Marvel)
9. Magnus: Robot Fighter #24 (Valiant)
10. WildStar: Sky Zero #2 (Image)

3 yeArs ago...

1. X-Men #7 (Marvel)
2. Uncanny X-Men #287 (Marvel)
3. X-Force #9 (Marvel)
4. Cage #1 (Marvel)
5. Spider-Man #21 (Marvel)
6. Youngblood #1 (Image)
7. Punisher: War Zone #2 (Marvel)
8. Marvel Comics Presents #100 (Marvel)
9. Wolverine #53 (Marvel)
10. X-Factor #77 (Marvel)

1. Mutants: The Amazing X-Men #2 (Marvel)
2. Mutants: The Astonishing X-Men #2 (Marvel)
3. Weapon X #2 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #29 (Image)
5. Mutants: Generation Next #2 (Marvel)
6. Gambit & The X-Ternals #2 (Marvel)
7. Factor-X #2 (Marvel)
8. X-Man #2 (Marvel)
9. Amazing Spider-Man #400 CE (Marvel)
10. X-Calibre #2 (Marvel)
11. Lady Death II: Btw. Heaven & H. #1 (Chaos!)
12. Angela #3 (Image)
13. Rogue #4 (Marvel)
14. WetWorks #6 (Image)
15. WildC.A.T.s #18 (Image)
16. Apocalypse Strike Files (Marvel)
17. Batman #517 (DC)
18. Spider-Man #57 CE (Marvel)
19. Superman #99 (DC)
20. Adventures of Superman #522 (DC)
21. Superman: The Man of Steel #43 (DC)
22. Action Comics #709 (DC)
23. Detective Comics #684 (DC)
24. Star Wars: Dark Empire II #3 (Dark Horse)
25. Spectacular Spider-Man #223 (Marvel)
26. Azrael #3 (DC)
27. Web of Spider-Man #123 (Marvel)
28. Prophet (vol. 2) #1 (Image)
29. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #37 (DC)
30. Batman: Leg's. of the Dark Knight #70 (DC)
31. Cyberforce #11 (Image)
32. Flash #100 CE (DC)
33. Robin #16 (DC)
34. Venom: Carnage Unleashed #1 (Marvel)
35. Star Wars: Tales...Dark Lords...Sith #5 (D. Horse)
36. X-Men 2099 #19 (Marvel)
37. Incredible Hulk #428 Deluxe Edition (Marvel)
38. Sandman #69 (DC)
39. Shadowhawk/Vampirella #2 (Image)
40. Catwoman #20 (DC)
41. Vampirella/Shadowhawk #1 (Harris)
42. Chapel #1 (Image)
43. Backlash #5 (Image)
44. Fantastic Four #399 (Marvel)
45. Green Lantern #61 (DC)
46. Cyberforce Annual #1 (Image)
47. StormWatch #19 (Image)
48. Vengeance of Vampirella #11 (Harris)
49. Batman: Gotham Nights II #2 (DC)
50. Bloodwulf #1 (Image)
51. Superboy #14 (DC)
52. The Maxx #14 (Image)
53. Impulse #1 (DC)
54. WarBlade: Endangered Species #2 (Image)
55. Knightmare Tales #1 (Image)
56. Spider-Man 2099 #30 (Marvel)
57. Union (vol. 2) #1 (Image)
58. Sin City: The Big Fat Kill #4 (D. Horse)
59. Deathblow #13 (Image)
60. Elektra: Root of Evil #2 (Marvel)
61. Beavis & Butt-Head #14 (Marvel)
62. Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe #3 (Tekno)
63. The Mask #1 (Dark Horse)
64. The Power of the Mark #1 (Image)
65. Leonard Nimoy's Primortals #4 (Tekno)
66. The Power of Shazam! #2 (DC)
67. Codename: Strykeforce #11 (Image)
68. Silver Surfer #103 (Marvel)
69. Aquaman #8 (DC)
70. Avengers #385 (Marvel)
71. Mr. Hero—The Newmatic Man #4 (Tekno)
72. Captain America #438 (Marvel)
73. Aliens/Predator: Deadliest...Species #10 (D. Horse)
74. Steel #14 (DC)
75. Preacher #1 (DC)
76. Mighty Morphin' P. Rangers #4 (Hamilton)
77. Iron Man #315 (Marvel)
78. Death Dealer #1 (Verotik)
79. Lobo #15 (DC)
80. Brigade #17 (Image)
81. Vampirella Classic #1 (Harris)
82. Force Works #10 (Marvel)
83. Daredevil #339 (Marvel)
84. Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D. #1 (Marvel)
85. Wonder Woman #96 (DC)
86. The Books of Magic #12 (DC)
87. Shaman's Tears #6 (Image)
88. Bloodstrike #19 (Image)
89. Supreme #24 (Image)
90. What If? #72 (Marvel)
91. Thor #485 (Marvel)
92. Newmen #11 (Image)
93. Justice League America #98 (DC)
94. Ghost Rider #60 (Marvel)
95. Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm & Such #2 (DC)
96. Simpsons Comics #8 (Bongo)
97. Ghost Rider 2099 #12 (Marvel)
98. Spider-Man: Funeral for an Octopus #2 (Marvel)
99. Aliens: Berserker #2 (Dark Horse)
100. Showcase '95 #4 (DC)

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and **Marc Wilkofsky**

More Than A Game

For many of today's comic collectors, their interest is far from a hobby, and certainly not a game. However, in an effort to remind these people that there can be a sizable amount of fun involved in the collecting of comics, we'll be connecting the latest comic book market events to the world of games—of all types. So, c'mon, you more obsessed readers—rediscover what so many comic lovers already know: that while comic collecting may be more than a game, it can actually be just as enjoyable.

THE HOT RECENT RELEASES (1991-95)

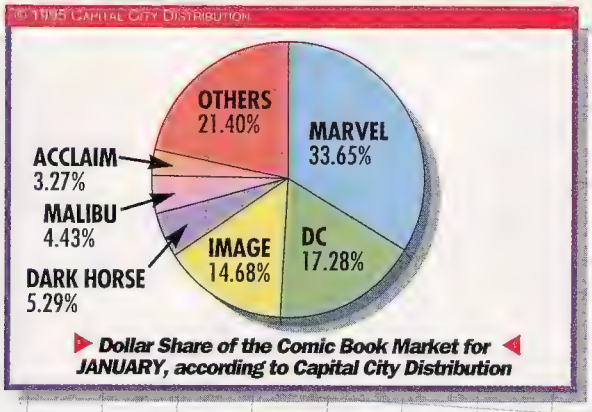
If the comic market itself is a game, then DC—while not the hands-down winner—is certainly giving Marvel a run for its publishing money. DC's Batman is Bruce Wayne again, and his whirlwind return storyline starting with ***Batman* #515**—known as "The Troika"—served to re-energize sales of the various Batbooks, including the ever-popular ***Robin***. ***Flash*** is still one of DC's aces-in-the-hole, and the excitement over the rapidly approaching *Flash* #100 (where it is expected the old Flash will die and a new Flash will emerge) is bandwagoning more and more readers to the speedster's book. Meanwhile, nothing stops Impulse's first appearance in issue **#92**, due to the fact that he is gaining his own ongoing book.

Wonder Woman is still a strong seller, thanks to the triple-threat of a villainous Bad Girl—Circe—in issues **#88** and **#89**, an entertaining Bad Pair—Diana and the new WW, Artemis—in the latest issues, and new hot artist Mike Deodato Jr.'s impressive work in **#90** up (keep an eye on his first *WW* book, #85, and #90 which is Artemis's debut). This title is actually being aggressively asked for in many a comic store, with collectors agreeing that the price—though possibly high in some stores—is right for the hotter issues, **#0** (one o' the rarer ones), #88, and **#92** (in which Artemis becomes the new WW). And some thought it would never happen!

Meanwhile, two darker titles are beating their lighter-sided "cousins" in the DC Family Feud—***The Spectre*** and ***Starman***. Both blasted out of the company's *Zero Hour* relaunch with much acclaim—people are getting more absorbed into *Spectre* (#1 is in the fast-moving area), and *Starman*, which came straight out of *ZH* as one of its semi-epilogues, has been popular from issue #0. Two more titles to watch, readers!

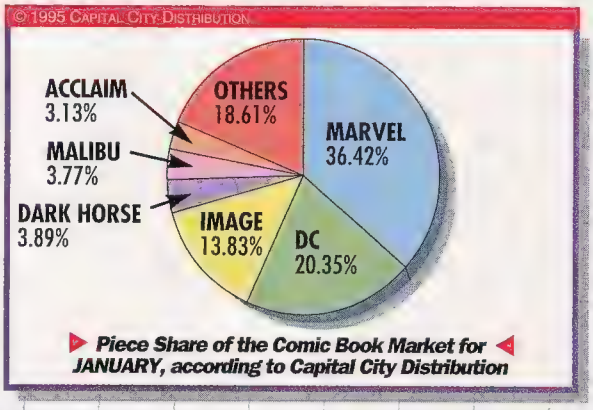
Marvel has been playing its cards extremely well on the X-people front. Not only is its "timeflip" universe achieving expected success (***X-Men Alpha* #1**, the start-off book, is one heckuva seller!), but the Marvel Select fanboy-feedin' mini-series like ***Rogue*** and ***Bishop*** have been clearing racks fast enough to get pool hall hustlers sweatin'. "How can we lose?" is the question asked by both the X-producers before releasing these hot books (hey, *Gambit* worked—and the Gold #1 is an active incentive book lately), and by today's RACs (Risk-Avoiding Collectors) before buying 'em.

Dare we forget Legion? #25, #26, #27, #28, #44—hike! As in steady price hike, for each of these ***New Mutants*** issues with early appearances by the psycho. Because playing with time wasn't good enough for him, he had to go and brutally slaughter his dad, Prof. Xavier—making Legion a major, hot character in the comic world today! He's not apt to cool off in the near future, and the



Dollar Share of the Comic Book Market for JANUARY, according to Capital City Distribution

DOLLAR SHARE: Marvel walloped 'em all this month, gaining 2.18 points, thanks to its "After Xavier" X-epic. Dark Horse and Malibu each increased a fraction of a point, probably because fans are interested in something different. Different from DC and Image books, that is; which both saw drops this time. Image had the larger reduction—1.27 points—but it only released 16 books instead of its regular 32 in January.



Piece Share of the Comic Book Market for JANUARY, according to Capital City Distribution

PIECE SHARE: After Xavier: The Age of Apocalypse was the promotion of the month, handing Marvel much success and a piece share over three points higher than last month. With the exception of Image, which lost over a point due to its fewer products, this success barely affected the other companies: the shares of DC, Malibu, Dark Horse, and Acclaim all stayed just about the same.

same applies to teen team book ***Generation X***—that **#1** issue is a *find*!

The only group of recent Marvel books even approaching the energy of the X-ers is, of course, Spider-Man's titles, but these have not recently seen any back issue activity—just steady current sales thanks to the Clone saga. No other Marvel title is doing anything on either side of the market, unfortunately. As Jennifer Schreiber, from the store All About Books & Comics in Phoenix, Ariz., notes, "Most of the midline Marvels are just that. Nothing seems to boost sales on *Avengers*, *Cap*, *Thor*, and the like." Well, Marvel, it's time to grab your market gamepiece, and some powerful dice—you need another Big Winner.

Gen^{13}*, *Team 7*, *StormWatch*, *Kindred*, *WetWorks...they're all kickin' successful butt, and they're all under Image's WildStorm company. The *Genster* is still the "returning champion" this month, but tie-in titles like *Team 7* (featuring the kids' parents) and *Kindred* (starring some Team 7ers) aren't slackin' off one bit. Looks like today's fans see Jim Lee's WS books as the most solid Image books—but that doesn't put the other studios in jeopardy, especially Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* line and Liefeld's Extreme/New Order line, headed by its big gun *Prophet*.

The Malibu/Ultraverse title that has won the Collector Concentration game from minute one is ***Prime***, and when the company decided to throw a variant cover on the hero's **13th issue**, it started a financial chain reaction of sorts that has brought the issue's value to more than double its cover price, $2.95. Other Malibu players, including ***Mantra*** and ***Rune***, have seen increased reader interest, thanks to the recent Marvel buyout and ***Godwheel*** mini. Speaking of *Godwheel*, some more-than-cameo appearances of Marvel's Thor and Loki in the series might just send the God of Thunder's Wheel of Sales spinning back at the bigger M. Meanwhile, two of Acclaim's top sellers and cornerstone books, ***Solar*** and ***X-O Manowar***, are two of the few Acclaim titles that are seeing any true life these days—and although each title's first issue has recently raised in value (Solar's book last month, X-O's this time around), even they have seen some drops. Birthquake is the company's best answer to come along in a while, and *Zero Hour* writer-artist Dan Jurgens's future connection to *Solar* and super-artist Bart Sears's to *X-O might* have something to do with it.

The game of Connect Four in the Bad Girl world is quickly changing to Connect Eight—the main madames used to be just **Vampirella**, **Lady Death**, **Shi**, and **Lady Rawhide** (Who all have representatives in the price raise department this month—again!); now two Wonder Women, Malibu's Necro-Mantra, and London Night Studios's Razor are in the gorgeous gladiators crew—and there's plenty more to come. If the phrase "played out" is even possible for the invincible BG trend, it won't be for a while, and several characters and books should be able to survive the fallout.

Well, if there's any sure thing in the market that's a safer bet than your local lottery, it's the fact that when a big-screen movie adapting a comic book series hits the screens, there will be at least a modicum of interest in that original comic. (Unfortunately, it's usually on a temporary basis—interest in Caliber's *Crow* books and Dark Horse's early Mask app's in *Mayhem* is presently waning—such is comic life.) Well, it appears to be happening again: with the release of ***Interview with the Vampire***, starring Brad Pitt and some Cruise guy, hands of veteran and new-blood collectors are slowly piecing through comic boxes for copies of Innovation's *Interview with the Vampire* series, and also its *Vampire Lestat* and *Queen of the Damned* publications. We'll keep you informed of any increases in any particular issue's value, as we wonder how the people who worked at the now-defunct Innovation feel about seeing three of their last few titles enjoy popularity. And, later this year, there's also *Judge Dredd*, *Tank Girl*, and a certain Caped Crusader...

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

2 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

3 **Stephen Platt**
Prophet

4 **Greg Capullo**
Angela

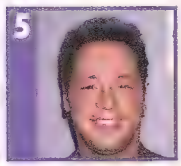


PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

5 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

6 **Alex Ross**
upcoming: *Kingdom Come*

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

7 **Whilce Portacio**
WetWorks

8 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **Andy Kubert**
X-Men

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

10 **Adam Kubert**
Wolverine

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

1 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman, Angela

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

2 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: The Big Fat Kill

3 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman, Spider-Man 2099

4 **John Byrne**
Next Men, upcoming: *Babe 2*

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

5 **Fabian Nicieza**
X-Men

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

6 **Scott Lobdell**
Uncanny X-Men, Generation X

PHOTO: AL ORTEGA

7 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

8 **Ron Marz**
Green Lantern, upcoming: *X-O Manowar*

PHOTO: J. SCHUYLER

9 **John Ostrander**
The Spectre, Eternal Warrior, Jink

10 **Chris Claremont**
Aliens vs. Predator: D. of S., Cyberforce, upcoming: *Sovereign 7*

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

Market WATCHERS

Dear Wizard,

Could you please tell me the value of a 1968 *Beatles: Yellow Submarine* comic printed by Gold Key, with the number 35000-902 on the cover?

Mike Gold
Browns Mills, NJ

Now *here's* a book I hope you have, Mike! This movie tie-in featuring Jim Valentino's favorite band is worth a whoppin' $175 in Near Mint condition with the pull-out poster inside and intact, and about half—$90—without the extra. But you do realize that if you sell it, Fab Four "owner" Michael Jackson gets half the dough, right?

Dear Wizard,

I was wondering how you can get Stan Lee's autograph.

Matt Laricy
Palos Park, IL

Why would I want Stan Lee's autograph? No, actually, conventions are the best place to go for that—or any creator's—'graph, although Lee himself is very hard to track down. Also, look for a con where the Stan will actually participate in a formal signing, and not a forum or lecture, 'cause he's one of those in 'n' out speakers. If you're one of those religious Stan followers who believe He started it all, don't fret—just keep patiently looking for the right appearance. Luck to ya, Matt!

Dear Market Watchers,

Which is worth more, *Action Comics* #1 or *Detective Comics* #1?

Brandon Rhiness
Wetaskiwin, Alberta, Canada

That's an interesting question—and easily answered: definitely *Action* #1, Superman's debut. As true collectors know, *Detective* #27, not #1, is the biggie, with the first appearance of Batman. That and the *Action* issue are tied at an approximate market value of $125,000, with Supes's book widely recognized as the most expensive comic out there. So, if you were able to take a time machine back to the late '30s, that's the book you should grab ten copies of and bring back—but you'd damage all reality by doing so. (Just my opinion.) Speakin' of damaging reality...

Hey, Wizard,

I wanted to know which comics have the first appearances of Legion (Marvel) and Lobo (DC), and the quitting of the first Robin (DC).

Jairo Monroy
El Monte, CA

From the top, they're all issues from cancelled team books: *New Mutants* #25 (although it's just a preview page), *Omega Men* #3 (with a slightly different look), and the well-done *New Teen Titans* (vol. 1) #39, where Dick Grayson gave up his Robin identity. All engaging characters, and, as at least Dick would agree, all with human (or human-like) weaknesses. (A fact which prevents me from believing that a human, who has nose-hairs and a butt, could bring about the end of the universe like Legion did.)

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MODERN AGE SELLERS (1970-90)

Now it's time to find out about our Modern Age contestants. First up is Spider-Man, whose suffering is actually pleasing many collectors—right, Spidey? "Well, I don't know who I am anymore. I thought I was the true Webster, but it's now starting to look like I'm the—ugh—clone. So I'm depressed, but it seems issues **#149-#151** of my ***Amazing*** title are still selling as strong as ever. If only I—" Great, Spidey. I've heard people are picking up ***What If?* #30**, from the first series, thanks to its story asking "What if the clone lived?" Good luck this year!

Next up would be Morpheus, but he couldn't appear here today, due to some family crisis. Well, as the audience knows, now that the end of ***Sandman*** is ever closer, collectors are stocking up on the dreamlord's early issues, especially **#1**, **#8**, and **#22**.

Finally, it appears we have Wolverine here, as a returning winner. "Yeah, the kids're buyin' up copies o' ***Hulk* #181**—my true blue debut—again. Guess they can't get enuffa me." Guess so, but you're not alone, Logan. The Warren ***Vampirella*** series is a hot find these days—collectors are going bonkers over these early appearances of the blood-lovin' babe.

SILVER AGE BOOKS (1955-70)

Very few of us can afford to buy a ***Showcase* #4**, ***The Brave and the Bold* #28**, or ***Amazing Spider-Man* #1**. Many of us can, however, afford the so-called "second tier" keys—books which introduce characters that, although not in the same league as some of the majors, nonetheless are worthy of recognition. Here's a look at some of the hot Silver Age books that don't require a second mortgage to purchase, and are still much more than consolation prizes.

At DC, we find *Showcase* and *B & B*, the two tryout series of the early Silver Age. Forget *Showcase* #4 (the second Flash's debut, weighing in at over $17,000). Let's check out ***Showcase* #60**, the first Silver Age appearance of the Spectre. High-grade copies are well worth the $100-$150 price. The great Murphy Anderson art makes this a real treasure, and the price leaves room for future growth. Another neat ***Showcase*** issue is **#73**, the first appearance of the Creeper by legend Steve Ditko. This book will always be a must for Ditko collectors (of which there are many), and *Showcase* collectors alike. A sharp, high-grade copy should run less than $100. DC's other tryout title, *The Brave and the Bold*, holds a few opportunities for quick-on-the-buzzer collectors as well. If you don't have the $4,000 to buy a high-grade copy of ***B & B* #28**, the first appearance of the Justice League of America, then take a look at **#54**, the origin and first app of the original Teen Titans. Here's a high-scoring book with lots of great room to go up, and a choice copy will cost you less than $200.

Over at Marvel, retailers keep reporting a strong demand for *Amazing Spider-Man*. When it comes to "second tier" keys, here's fertile ground. ***Amazing Spider-Man* #28**, the first appearance and origin of Molten Man, is a classic. With the fantastic black cover, and the great Ditko art, it's a fine book with lots of room to grow. Expect to pay $300-$400 for a top condition copy. ***ASM* #50** is another classic, featuring the first appearance of the Kingpin, who'd be a cool Mortal Kombatant. It'll run you around $300 for a sharp copy, but this will seem cheap in a few years. Two other Marvel titles deserve mention for some good buying opportunities: *Silver Surfer* (1st series) and *Fantastic Four*. If you're collecting Marvel keys and haven't picked up a ***Surfer* #1**, you'd better get busy. It's a classic double-size issue, squarebound (which makes it scarce in top condition), and features the origin of the Surfer. If you can find a Near Mint copy for under $400, snap it up. For good buys in *Fantastic Four*, check out ***FF* #100**, for the same reason as *Amazing Spider-Man* #100. Also, check out ***Fantastic Four* #52**, the first appearance of the Black Pan-

ther. It's very much a sleeper. A Near Mint copy will cost you around $75—if you see one, pick it up.

Lots of these "sleepers" are out there; all you have to do is look. Retailers tell us that these lower-priced books are selling extremely well and are getting harder to find. You don't have to spend a fortune—or mana, if you're a *Magic* card game nut—to build a great Silver Age collection.

THE GOLDEN AGE MARKET (1938-54)

Finding affordable (read: cheap) Golden Age books to recommend is a challenge, unless you're talking *Joe Palooka* or *Dick Tracy*, and nobody wants those right now, no matter how cheap they are. When it comes to cheap superhero books from the '40s, the well has almost run dry. But, some lesser-known superhero books can be had without dipping into the ol' college fund. You've got to be quick, though. When these Golden Age jewels show up at a convention or local shop, snap 'em up. If you pass them up, more than likely they'll be gone when you come back. Retailers tell us that Golden Age superhero books are some of their fastest-selling items at shows.

One of the series that features a pretty neat superhero character and isn't too sky-high is *Catman Comics*, a series of 32 issues published from 1941-1946. The first issue will cost you less than $1,000, and most of the other issues can be had in the $100-$200 range. These are true classics and are well worth the money. They're as hard to grab onto as Olympic medals, though, so good luck finding them. Another series that's within the budget of most serious Golden Age collectors is *Daredevil Comics*. No, not the "Man Without Fear." We're talking the original, here, published way back in 1941. The first issue's title, "Daredevil Battles Hitler," sums up the typical storyline of the early issues. Daredevil's main protagonist, however, was the evil Claw, with whom Daredevil seemed to be in constant battle. The first 10 issues are pretty pricey—with issue #1 weighing in around $5,000 and #2-#9 running about the same as early issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*. —but historically, you can't beat these vintage jewels. Their price is within reach of most Golden Age collectors (who seem to have more dough to spend than the average new comics buyer), and, hey, you just can't beat that musty old smell.

There, y'see? Comic collectin' may not be a trivial pursuit, but all the excitement beats a good chess game any time! It's your move, Watchers—enjoy "playing" the market! ☆

Jon Warren excels at strip poker, while Marc Wilkofsky's lifelong dream is to play Plinko or The Race Game on *The Price is Right*.

Dear Wizard,

When is *Amazing Spider-Man* #122 going up? It's the first death of Green Goblin—shouldn't that be worth a lot of money?

Tommy Clay Harris
Milwaukee, WI

Dear Market Watchers,

Why do you have a (?) mark in the middle of the R: Elektra notation in your *Daredevil* #190 listing? I have the comic, and to me it is quite obvious that Elektra has returned.

Artem Litvinovich
Brooklyn, NY

Y'know, it's no surprise that these types of questions regard Marvel characters. The "first death" of Green Goblin, huh? Actually, that's the death of the *first* double-G, and while it's a good seller, there's only a semipossibility that it'll see a higher value, Tommy.

As for Elektra, Artem, many DD fans would argue that it wasn't all that obvious; her appearance on the cliff may have been a symbolic scene in which she proves herself after death, or the real thing—her physical return. It looks like Marvel is steering towards the latter these days, but you never know. Good questions, though—and remember, people, if the folks at Marvel ever say a character's dead, you can believe them as much as the guys who say they only watch *Melrose* for Heather.

Dear Marc,

Some ten years ago, I used to buy comics in order to *read* and *enjoy* them, and I still possess most of the *fumetti* I bought when I was a kid. It was fun back then to have a hobby: collecting comics.

Let's have a look at what's happening now: in today's comic book market—and I am talking about the Italian market, too, now flooded with USA comics, both the translated and original versions—it seems that a lot of people are buying comics because someone else says they are "hot," because readers will surely be "blown away," and because the gold/holo/platinum/special covers will be worth millions.

Now, I wonder: is this sane? What are comics for? I have been reading comics since I was six—I am 27 now—and I'm not tired of reading about Spidey and all the superheroes, but do we *really* need five Spider-books or ten X-titles? I do not think so.

I think quality has to be the key, and I welcome the work of people like Frank Miller, Jeff Smith, Peter David, John Byrne, and many more creators who still love comics, and I do hope that most publishers stop damaging this field by forgetting that comics are mainly for fun, not money.

Thanks for listening.

Alfredo Ferrante
Rome, Italy

My only reply to your heartfelt letter, Alfredo, is that it seems that we adult readers of comics are the true kids now; we're the ones who grew up with and enjoyed comics through the years, and still find excitement in the serial nature of comics and the entertaining literature presented through this medium. The younger, more impressionable, fan set is what the more money-hungry publishers are pandering to with their gotta-have-it products. There are exceptions, of course, leading me to believe that more and more publishers will refrain from doing the damage you mentioned. Thanks for writing.

Before I go this month, I have a question to throw out to all you Watchers out there: with all the new books being published, can you afford back issues these days? Send me your answers, and I'll try to print a few! See y'all!

—Marc Wilkofsky
Dreamin' 'bout Mary Chapin

Hey, Market Watchers! Send your letters to:

MARKET WATCHERS
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064

Dream Teams

by Todd McFarlane

Definitive teams. They're something that all of us think about during our days of comic collecting. Before I became a comic book professional, I was about as hardcore a fan as anyone, and I used to dream about what the best art teams were on each of the various comics I collected. This month, I thought I'd share these definitive teams with you.

Let's start with the major title characters at Marvel. When someone says Spider-Man, I think of John Romita Sr., who I think was by far the best artist at laying down the definitive Spider-Man. It's his Spidey artwork that's on the toothbrushes and pajamas, and is what parents relate to as "the look" for the character.

As for the Fantastic Four, Jack Kirby defined the look and feel of these characters for a hundred issues, but Joe Sinnott had to be inking him to complete the perfect look. Honorable mention goes to George Pérez and Joe Sinnott, who gave the book a short—but brilliant—run in the late '70s.

The Hulk was always rendered beautifully by Sal Buscema and Ernie Chan who drew the character in the mid- to late-'70s. Like I said last month, they made the Hulk look fittingly powerful.

If one thinks of *Daredevil*, Gene Colan drew a lot of good issues, but it's hard to bet against Frank Miller and his run. Frank really redefined the way you looked at Daredevil, and the way you thought of the character, in and of itself. Anything before Frank almost didn't matter anymore—a reader can start with Miller's work and never read anything before his tenure.

The X-Men, without a doubt, would be drawn by John Byrne and Terry Austin.

The Avengers, while drawn by a host of different big-name creators, had a stint drawn by George Pérez and Pablo Marcos that was kinda cosmic and epic, which suited all the great Marvel characters.

To me, Iron Man was always John Romita Jr. inked by Bob Layton. Bob Layton was the guy who actually made Iron Man's costume shine like a '57 Chevy that had just been waxed.

Although various inkers inked over his pencils, John Buscema drew the definitive Thor. Buscema had a great run throughout the '70s with various writers, that was really defining in terms of what things looked like in Asgard and the like.

Captain America, besides the Jack Kirby run, has yet to have a defining look. John Byrne had a short stint in the late '70s, but he wasn't on the book long enough to really make the character his own. Cap is a hero just waiting to be had by some young kid who can come in with a different style and look (as well as a writer with a good angle) for Cap than what we've seen in the last 25 years.

Over at DC, you obviously have Batman. For me, the Marshall Rogers-Terry Austin team on *Detective Comics* in the mid-'70s was unbelievable. It was trend-setting the way the cape was drawn, as was the attention made to details.

Superman is like Captain America. I don't believe we've seen *the* Superman that'll turn kids on. Curt Swan had a long stint on the character, and John Byrne did Superman for a time, but in the end, Superman is an icon. I'm not sure anyone can come on board to a Superman book, and turn around the artistic look of the character for all to follow. Sure, he has long hair now, but that's very minor.

Green Lantern, in my perfect comic world, would always be drawn by Gil Kane. Kane is "Mr. Action" and defined what the power of Green Lantern should look like when drawn.

The Flash had a hell of a run out of Carmine Infantino, and I don't think anyone has come along since to capture the "look" of speed and motion. George Pérez did a couple of short stories which almost captured that, but not quite.

And speaking of Pérez, his run on *The New Teen Titans* was absolutely brilliant. When I was younger, that was one of the hot DC books, and it was that book, in fact, which I based as a standard of quality for all DC books.

Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt on *Legion of Super-Heroes* was a great artistic run. They really defined what team superhero comics were all about.

And, hey, I can't forget my all-time favorite team of Gene Colan and Tom Palmer on *Tomb of Dracula*. Though not a big superhero title, per se, the pair was the best at setting the mood that writer Marv Wolfman was trying to pull off.

You've got to remember, I'm a comic product of the mid-'70s to the mid-'80s, and chose the majority of my dream teams from that time period.

At this point, I'd be interested in what you, the readers, think about this. Do you think the Hulk was much more defined when Dale Keown was drawing him? Or the X-Men when Jim Lee drew the team? Or Spider-Man by Steve Ditko? Let me know by writing to:

E.G.O. Dream Teams
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064 ☆

Todd McFarlane is a co-founder of Image Comics, and is the writer and artist of Spawn.

*EVERYONE'S GOT OPINIONS

The opinions expressed in this column are not necessarily those of *Wizard: The Guide to Comics*, its editorial staff, or Image Comics.

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SHOWS & CONVENTIONS

To help connect you with the biggest and best comic book shows and conventions in your area, *Wizard* is still printing all the stuff we used to print in this department. But we've added extra space so you can find out in advance about admission discounts, creator appearances, and other superneat stuff!

These listings are as accurate as we can get 'em, but *Wizard* always recommends phoning ahead before you attend an event—show information sometimes changes after we go to press. With that in mind, it's time for all you comic-hungry hordes to go conventioneering!

ARKANSAS

APRIL 29, LITTLE ROCK

Comics & Non-Sports Card Show, Best Western Inn Towne, I-30 and 6th St., 35 8-foot tables @ $50 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm. Contact: Cecil Johnson of Comic World Promotions @ 501-794-3394.

CALIFORNIA

MARCH 5 AND 19, SAN DIEGO

San Diego State University Twice-Monthly Comic, Sportscard, Toys, Pins, & Memorabilia Show, Aztec Center Montezuma Hall (8E to College Ave. exit; go south on College Ave.), 100 tables @ $60 each (reserve before Feb. 19 and save $10 per table), $2 admission (children under 5 free), 10am-5pm both days. Contact: Julia @ 714-768-3575.

DELAWARE

MARCH 12, DOVER

Super Con, Sheraton, Route 13 South, 60 tables @ $60 each, $3 admission, 10am-4:30pm. A special mystery guest to be announced. Over $1,000 in door prizes donated by most major publishers, and prize drawings every hour. Grand prize of $150 in show cash held at 4pm. Art contest judged by our guests. Contact: Derek Woywood of Collectors Comics @ 609-782-0817.

FLORIDA

MARCH 25, 26, ORLANDO

Florida Comic Book MEGA-CON, Orlando Expo Centre, 500 W. Livingston St. (downtown Orlando). "LAST WIZARD REMINDER! Don't miss the most important comic book event in Florida history. The MEGA-CON features publishers, dealers, panel discussions, contests, gaming tournaments, and today's most exciting artists and writers!" For more information, contact Skyline Promotions @ 407-426-7745.

GEORGIA

MARCH 3-5, 10-12, 17-19, 24-26, 31-APRIL 2, DULUTH/ATLANTA

PT Shows, Inc., Outlets Limited Mall at I-85 Pleasant Hill Rd., 32 tables @ $75 each, free admission, Fri. 10am-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 12 noon-6pm. Contact: David Bradford or Charles Dozetos @ 404-495-7671 or 800-251-5150.

MARCH 10-12, ATLANTA

SportsNet*Comic Net Trade Show & Convention, North Atlanta Trade Center, 1700 Jeurgens Court (between Jimmy Carter Blvd. and Indian Trail Rd.), 400 booths, $5 daily admission. Guests: All six kids from *The Brady Bunch* show, all living cast members of *Gilligan's Island* and all-time touchdown king for the SF 49ers, Jerry Rice. Contact: John Connor @ 704-299-7469.

INDIANA

APRIL 1, INDIANAPOLIS

Circle City Comic-Con, Quality Inn, North Shadeland Ave., 25 tables @ $40 each ($30 in advance), $2 admission (attendees under 6/over 55 are free), 10am-4pm. Guests: To Be Announced, Contact: D & R Comics @ 219-471-1722.

APRIL 7-9, INDIANAPOLIS

Hoosier Comic Show, Eastgate Mall, 7150 E. Washington St., 25 tables @ $60 each, free admission, mall hours (Friday-Saturday: 10am-9pm; Sunday: Noon-5pm). Contact: Rick Garcia @ 317-357-9999.

APRIL 8, FORT WAYNE

Summit City Comic-Con, Ramada Inn (I-69, Exit 105A), 25 tables @ $40 each ($30 in advance), $2 admission (under 6/over 55 are free), 10am-4pm. Guests: To Be Announced. Contact: D & R Comics @ 219-471-1722.

KENTUCKY

MARCH 25, LOUISVILLE

Comics, Cards, and Music Collector's Show, Holiday Inn, Bardstown Rd., table fees: 1 for $30 or 2 for $50, $1 admission, 10am-4pm. Contact: Wally Ross of The Perfect Game Productions @ 502-228-9707.

MASSACHUSETTS

MARCH 12, WOBURN

Joe Monks and CFD comics creators of *Cry for Dawn* and *NightCry* will be appearing at the Monthly Comic and Non-Sports Card Show, Ramada Hotel (Exit 35 off Route 128), 35 tables @ $50 each (2 for $75), $2 adult admission (children under 6 free), 11am-4pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. *Magic* cards, toys, thousands of low-priced comics, and more. Free promotional gifts and newsletters to attendees. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

MARCH 19, NATICK

Monthly Comic and Non-Sports Card Show, Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Route 9E off of Route 30, 35 tables @ $50 each (2 for $75), $2 adult admission, $1 for young adults (children under 6 free), 11am-4pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. *Magic* cards, statues, toys, comics at half price, thousands of 50-cent comics, and much more. Free newsletter and promotional gifts to attendees. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

MARCH 26, ROCKLAND

Monthly Comic & Non-Sport Card Show, Ramada Inn, Exit 14 (Route 228) off of Route 3, 35 tables @ $50 each (2 for $75), $2 adult admission, $1 for young adults (children under 6 free), 11am-4pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. *Magic* cards, toys, original artwork, thousands of low-priced comics and more. Free newsletter and promotional gifts. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

MICHIGAN

MARCH 24-26, NOVI

Motor City Comic Con, Novi Expo Center, 43700 Expo Center Dr., 225 tables, $10 admission for 1 day or $25 for all 3, Fri. 2pm-8pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Amateur Art Contest, Charity Auction, Costume Contest (only Sat. afternoon), Animation Festival, call for more information about other special features. Guests include: Berni Wrightson (*Swamp Thing*), John Romita Jr. (*X-Men, Daredevil: Man Without Fear*), Matt Wagner (*Grendel*), Kelley Jones (*Batman*), Joe Jusko (Tarzan trading cards), James Robinson (*Starman, WildC.A.T.s, The Golden Age*), Mike Baron (*Nexus, Badger*), Marv Wolfman (*New Titans, A•X*), Chris Sprouse (*Legionnaires*), Todd McFarlane (*Spawn*), Al Simmons (AKA Spawn), Susan Van Camp (*Magic: The Gathering*), Brian Murray (*Supreme*), John K. Snyder (*Grendel*), Julius Schwartz (DC Editor), Len Wein (*Swamp Thing*), Jo Duffy (*Catwoman, Glory*), Len Kaminski (*Iron Man*), Bob Burden (*Flaming Carrot*), David Quinn (*Dr. Strange*). Contact: Michael Goldman @ 810-350-2633.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

MARCH 5, NASHUA

Monthly Comic and Non-Sport Card Show, Holiday Inn, Exit 4 off Route 3, 35 tables @ $50 each (2 for $75), $2 adult admission, $1 for young adults (children under 6 free), 11am-4pm. Up to $200 in credit will be raffled off. Low prices, *Magic* cards, toys, and much more. Free newsletter and promotional gifts to attendees. Contact: Larry Harrison @ 617-596-3336.

NEW JERSEY

MARCH 11, WOODBRIDGE

Comic Book Marketplace, The Sheraton Hotel, 515 Route 1 South, across from the Woodbridge Mall, 40 tables @ $55 each, $3 admission, 10am-4pm. Guests: Mark McKenna (*Nick Fury, The Punisher*), Vince Russell (*Youngblood Strike File, Supreme*), also Steve Henel & Beatriz Paven (*Xenya*). Plus a $100 show cash giveaway! Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

MARCH 12, BORDENTOWN

Comic Book Marketplace, The Days Inn Hotel, Route 206 North off Exit 7 of the New Jersey Turnpike, 30 tables @ $55 each, $3 admission,

CORRECTION: The Florida Comic Book MEGA-CON Admission fee is $10. Wizard apologizes for the error in issue #43.

10am-4pm. Guest: Ted Slampyak & John Workman (*Mr. Hero*). Plus a $100 show cash giveaway! Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

MARCH 30 AND EVERY THURSDAY IN APRIL, FAIRFIELD

Stan The Man Quality Thursday Night Comic & Sports Card Show, Fairfield Radisson Hotel, 690 Route 46 East, 50 6-foot tables @ $35 each, free admission, 5pm-10pm. Contact: Donna Fitzgerald @ 201-228-5257.

NEW YORK

MARCH 18, KINGSTON

Mid-Hudson Valley Comic Con '95, State Armory, Manor Avenue, 65 eight-foot tables @ $65 each, $5 admission, 10am-8pm. Charity auction of original art and limited editions from 2-4pm for Neal Pozner Memorial to benefit AIDS research. Door prizes and art contest. Guests: Greg Capullo (*Spawn, Violator, Angela*), Paul Anderson (*Ultraverse, The Strangers*), Terry Austin (*X-Men, Rogue*), Charles Barnett (*Elfquest*), Dave Cockrum (*Futurians, X-Men*), Kevin Conrad (*X-Force*), Todd Dezago (*Web of Spider-Man*), Mike Dubisch (*Flesh Crawlers*), Michael Jan Friedman (*Star Trek: TNG*), John Hebert (*Punisher War Journal*), Fred Hembeck (satirist), Jeff Jones (*Age of Innocence*), Elaine Lee (*Vamps, Prince Valiant*), Ron Marz (*Green Lantern, Silver Surfer, X-O Manowar*), Jon J. Muth (*Moonshadow, M*), Rachel Pollack (*Doom Patrol, New Gods*), Bart Sears (*Brute & Babe, X-O Manowar*), Andy Smith (*Quasar, X-O Manowar*), Joe Staton (*E-Man, Batman*), Herb Trimpe (*Hulk, FF Unlimited*), Tom Vincent (*Thanos Quest, Silver Surfer*), and others to be announced. Call (914) 247-0637 for more information.

APRIL 2, MANHATTAN

Comic Book Extravaganza, The Marriott-East, 525 Lexington Ave. and 49th St., 63 tables @ $95 each, $4 admission (children under 6 free), 10am-4pm. Madness, mayhem, and mirth with **Ben Edlund**, creator of ***The Tick*! American Maid** is waiting for you, **The Crusading Chameleon** is changing his underwear, and **Arthur** is doing the books! Strap on your Pampers™, because you may wet yourself when you visit the wild, wacky, and wonderful world of the Tick! Promos and premiums galore from the finest comic and card companies, with the first 50 people getting super-packages! 50 cents off admission with this *Wizard* ad. Contact: Max Gottfried @ 718-441-9868.

NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL 1, GREENSBORO

Comic Book & Trading Card Show, Howard Johnson Coliseum, High Point Rd., 35 8-foot tables @ $60 each (if paid in full by 3/20, table fee is $50), 10am-5pm, Guests: To Be Announced; sports cards and toys, too! Contact: Mark Merrill @ 704-787-3911.

OHIO

MARCH 19, ST. CLAIRSVILLE

Ohio Valley Comic Con, Days Inn, I-70 at Exit 220, 28 6-foot tables @ $40 each, $2 admission (children 6 and under free), 10am-4pm, Contact: Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056.

APRIL 9, COLUMBUS

Buckeye Comic Con, Holiday Inn West, I-270 at Exit 10, 58 6-foot tables @ $55 each, $3 admission (children 6 and under free), 10am-4pm. Guests: Steve Erwin (*Deathstroke, Star Trek: TNG—Shadowheart*), Phil Hester (*Swamp Thing, Argus*), Andé Parks (*Superboy, Anima, Catwoman, Wonder Woman*), Aaron Archer (*Gumbo*). Contact: Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056.

OKLAHOMA

MARCH 18, TULSA

Tulsa Con II, Quality Inn, I-244 Garnet St., 40 tables @ $40 each, $1.50 admission, 10am-5pm. Guests include: Gerard Jones (writer of *Prime*, *JLA, UltraForce, Hulk 2099*), Magic Tournament. Contact: Brian Bunyard or Jack @ 918-456-5511 ext. 6951 or 6872.

PENNSYLVANIA

MARCH 5, CHADDS FORD

Comic Book Marketplace, The Ramada Inn, 1110 Baltimore Pike, at Route 1 & Route 202, 30 tables @ $55 each, $3 admission, 10am-4pm. Guests: Andé Parks (*Catwoman, Wonder Woman, Anima*), Chris Allan (*Ninjara and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Adventures*). Plus a $100 show cash giveaway! Contact: Ron Jordan @ 908-828-5955.

MARCH 18, LANGHORNE

Comics & Cards, Sheraton Books County, 400 Oxford Valley Road, 55 tables @ $40 each, $1 admission, 9am-3pm. Contact: Greg Petrino @ 215-968-8577.

APRIL 8, BENSALEM

Comic Book Show, Comfort Inn, 3660 Street Rd. (East of US 1, 3 minutes south of PA Turnpike, Exit 28), 25 tables @ $40 each, $1 admission, 9am-4pm. Wide variety of Golden & Silver Age comics. Contact: Mike McShane @ 215-671-8189.

TENNESSEE

MARCH 25, MEMPHIS

Comics & Non-Sports Card Show, Days Hotel, 3222 Airways Blvd. (I-240 & Airways Blvd., Exit 23B), 35 tables @ $40 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm. Contact: Cecil Johnson of Comic World Promotions @ 501-794-3394.

TEXAS

MARCH 4-5, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn Northwest, 14996 N.W. Freeway, Highway 290 at Beltway 8 Exit W. Little York, 35 tables @ $125 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm (both days). Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Free pack of Marvel Comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 5, SAN ANTONIO

Card and Comic Convention, Wyndham Hotel (I-10 & Wurzbach), 40 tables @ $55 each, $1 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 11, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Hilton Hotel Southwest, 6780 S.W. Freeway, Exit Hillcroft, 30 tables @ $70 each, $2 admission, 9am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Free Marvel Comic pack with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 11, SAN ANTONIO

Card and Comic Convention, Embassy Suites Hotel, I-10 410W behind Malibu, 40 tables @ $55 each, $1 admission, 9:30am-4pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 12, HOUSTON

Carnival '95, Ramada Kings Inn, 1301 Nasa Rd. I, 60 tables (Call for table fee), $3 admission (children under age 7 $1 admission), 10:30am-5pm. Guests: To Be Announced, tons of comics, *Magic* cards, POGs, toys, fantastic door prizes, action figures, and collectibles. Contact: D. Jennings @ 713-335-SHOW (7469).

MARCH 12, 26, AUSTIN

Card and Comic Convention, Embassy Suites Hotel, 5901 North I-H35, 35 tables @ $55 each, $1.50 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for comics and cards. Free pack of comic cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 18, 19, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Holiday Inn, I-10 & Silber, 7611 Katy Frwy. Exit Silber, 50 tables @ $125 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm (both days). Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Pack of Marvel cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

MARCH 25, LIVE OAK

Bi-monthly Card & Comic Show, Live Oak Civic Center, Pat Booker Rd. (off I-35, near Randolph Air Force Base), 20 tables @ $40 each or 2 for $70, $1 admission, 10am-6pm. Door prizes hourly. Contact: Dale Eckman @ 210-945-0003.

MARCH 26, HOUSTON

Card and Comic Convention, Marriott Greenspoint, 255 N. San Houston Pkwy. East, 50 tables @ $70 each, $2 admission, 10am-5pm. Door prize drawings every 30 minutes for cards and comics. Free pack of Marvel cards with this ad and paid admission. Contact: Mark Hlavinka @ 713-293-8676.

APRIL 9, HOUSTON

Carnival '95, Holiday Inn Hobby, 9100 Gulf Freeway, 60 tables (Call for table fee), $3 admission (children under age 7 $1 admission), 10:30am-5pm. Guests: To Be Announced, tons of comics, *Magic* cards, POGs, toys, fantastic door prizes, action figures, and collectibles. Contact: D. Jennings @ 713-335-SHOW (7469).

WEST VIRGINIA

APRIL 2, PARKERSBURG

Parkersburg-Marietta Comic Con, Holiday Inn, I-77 at Exit 176 (Route 50), 40 6-foot tables @ $40 each or 3 for $100, $2 admission (children 6 and under free), 10am-4pm. Contact: Jeff Harper @ 216-499-6056. ☆

If you'd like to use *Wizard*'s magic to help advertise your comic book event, call Karen Evora at (914) 268-3907.

Wizard Bullpen

CRUSH THE NEW KIDS!

With the launch of Wizard Press's new gaming magazine *InQuest*, the ever-pleasant Wizard staff has thrown down the gauntlet of battle and challenged the still-wet-behind-the-ears *InQuest* staff to a game of miniature golf (we're staying the hell away from the *Sportslook* crew, since they handed us our asses in bowling last year). *Wizard* Editor-in-Chief, and oddly enough, *InQuest* Editor-in-Chief (Hmmm, that is odd.), and team captain Pat McCallum says, "Hey, pull my finger." In response, *InQuest* Editor, occasional *Wizard* nuisance, and *InQuest* team dictator Mike Searle comments, "Prepare to be spanked." The teams? The *Wizard* team reads as a veritable Who's Who in the mini-golf community. Headed up by the pasty Mr. McCallum, they are: *Wizard* editor and occasional neighborhood streaker Brian Cunningham, Contributing Editor and ratty-beard grower Marc Wilkofsky, and Copy Editor and effeminate-dog-owner Andrew Kardon (who blew it for us in last year's bowling match). The *InQuest* team roll call reads like a list of Who Cares. Led by the mildly gamey Mr. Searle, they are: Art Director and softball ace Robin "Jamos" Ramos, Contributing Editor and devourer of human flesh Matthew Milliken, and Copy Editor and enema enthusiast Mike Fasolo. The stakes: the losers (i.e., *InQuest*) take the winners (i.e., us) out for a belly-fillin' feast at Mexican restaurant supreme, Fiesta Cancun in lavish Stony Point, N.Y. The results next month, sports fans.

DEATH TO SEA MONKEYS!

Hide your pets! For Sue Juers, Wizard Press Assistant Office Manager by day and murderer of tiny innocents by night, may be coming to your home! One afternoon, Mrs. Juers entered the office of Bob Marshall and David Prager, and spotted their container of Sea Monkeys (otherwise known as brine shrimp—puny, *defenseless* creatures of the deep available through comic ads). Asking, "What's this?" she grabbed the family's home, and turned it sideways, sending a flood of little Monkeys and water bursting through the top! Of course, the guys were shocked by this wanton slaughtering, but they decided not to press charges. In addition, no restraining order has been placed against Sue, who ironically will soon be bringing a new life into the world (she's the first pregnant Wizardite), but she has agreed to maintain a sizable distance from the new clan of understandably frightened Monkeys.

WHO ARE YOU?

Mercedes Cabo

Administrative Assistant, *Wizard: The Guide To Comics*

What is it you do at *Wizard*?
I'm in a new position that opened after Wizard Press departmentalized its various magazines; I help out with all types of administrative tasks for the *Wizard: TGTC* department, including file and invoice management, and convention and travel arrangements.

Your favorite section in *Wizard*?
I think Casting Call is neat, and I like the News section—the brief stories give you the gist of all the industry events.

What do you like most about your job?
I like the travelling, the people are fun to work with, and it's not a corporate atmosphere; I have the freedom to walk around in my pink ballerina slippers if I want to, with no questions asked.

Favorite city or country?
I don't have a favorite yet, but I can say that I like the weather in San Diego, the food in New Orleans, and any hot, sunny beach will do.

What would your biography be called?
Are We There Yet?

Favorite TV show?
ER—it's emotional, and makes you laugh and cry at the same time. My dog Husky likes it, too.

Favorite musical performers?
I like 98 percent of what my colleague/office neighbor Matt Tierney listens to. I also like Melissa Etheridge.

Who would play you in a movie?
Maria Conchita Alonso, who starred in *Predator II*, or *Speed*'s Sandra Bullock.

Actors with whom you'd like to star in a film?
Andy Garcia and Mel Gibson—I like their accents!

What are/were your nicknames?
There's Mercedes, like the car, which is definitely wrong—the "Merc" part is actually supposed to be accented. My friends call me Merc—which is pronounced "Merse," not "Merk."

What superpower would you want, and why?
The power to make other people or myself disappear—permanently or temporarily—at my discretion.

Top 10 things the Ship in *Star Trek: Voyager* will find at the Other Side of the Galaxy:

10. All the same stories *ST:TNG* did.
9. Space Family Robinson.
8. The limits of politically correct casting.
7. Spaaaaaaace Ghooooooost!
6. Another Spider-Clone.
5. One o' them really cool StarGate things.
4. A ship that doesn't look like a garden trowel.
3. *Space: 1999* (it's only four years away, you know).
2. Hopefully, the Borg (that'll make for a short season).
1. A cure for Pon-Farr (uh-oh).

✓ COLLECTOR'S SPORTSLOOK #17

Hey! What are you guys doing Friday night? Going out drinkin', chasin' women, and stayin' up till all hours of the evening? Oh, sorry, you're probably too young. Well, we've got something better for you to do. How would you like to sit around and talk about **Shaquille O'Neal** with **Sy Sperling**, **Dick Vitale**, **Jack Ramsay**, and **Capt. Lou Albano**? That's what happens in the April issue of *Collector's Sportslook*. If that doesn't float your boat, check out the profile on those lovable **hockey tough guys** known as "goons." And don't worry, there's no skimpin' on the contests—they're as cool as ever. So what are you waiting for? Get off your duff and pick up the latest *Sportslook* before Friday night rolls around! **$3.95**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID PRAGER

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MADE IN THE U.S.A.

WIZARD Profile

Here's looking at...M.D. BRIGHT

by Michael Berry

Guys that fly, that's his bag. From his work on Marvel's *Iron Man* and DC's *Green Lantern*, artist M.D. (Mark) Bright has brought his talents to bear on a number of high-profile airborne superheroes.

As the regular artist for Milestone Media's *Icon*, the generally laid-back Bright has plenty of opportunities to pursue his enthusiasm. Bright says of the title character, "He's a guy with a big cape who flies. You can't beat that." Any other special attractions? "I've never had to draw a girl character regularly before, so I'm kind of getting into that [with Icon's sidekick, Rocket]. But it wouldn't be any fun at all if nobody flew."

A New Jersey native and resident, 39-year-old Bright remembers first encountering comics at his grandmother's hairdressing salon, where she kept Archie and Richie Rich books on hand to amuse the kids. Later, his taste developed to the point where he could appreciate the artwork and storytelling of Jack Kirby, Neal Adams, and John Byrne. After studying illustration at Pratt Institute, Bright made his first pro sale in 1978, when he earned a *House of Mystery* assignment from DC's art director Joe Orlando.

Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter later found work for Bright at Marvel, where he debuted in *Avengers* #225. During the '80s, he contributed to Marvel's *Iron Man, Power Man and Iron Fist*, and one of his personal favorites, *G.I. Joe*. He also drew 1987's *Spider-Man vs. Wolverine* and a *Falcon* mini-series.

Bright was DC's premier Green Lantern artist for three years, beginning with *Action Comics Weekly* #621 in 1988, which led into two *Emerald Dawn* mini-series and the *Green Lantern* regular series. Like *G.I. Joe*, *Green Lantern* was an assignment he enjoyed. As he says, "I liked the fact that everything didn't have to be done on Earth...the intergalactic aspect of what could happen."

After so many years of drawing such a wide range of superheroes, Bright seems content to focus exclusively on *Icon* for the time being. He claims to have nothing new lined up that he wishes to discuss.

"I really like working for Milestone," he says. "I think it's great working on stuff where there's a bunch of different kinds of black people, as opposed to everyone walking around with the same liberal 'helping the brothers because the brothers can't help themselves' attitude."

The artist is especially proud of his first comics scripting assignment on *Icon* #14. Would he like to take on further writing chores? Bright says, "Sure, if they're crazy enough to let me."

Asked where he sees himself in 10 years, Bright laughs. "I'm not supposed to be doing comics now. I'm supposed to be into film work by now."

ICON ™ & © MILESTONE MEDIA. PHOTO COURTESY OF M.D. BRIGHT.

First comic book read...
Probably an Archie comic. Hopefully, *Betty & Veronica*.

Favorite comic of all time...
That's a toss-up. Either *Legion of Super-Heroes* or *The Fantastic Four*.

Favorite work of your own...
The *Emerald Dawn* mini-series.

Comics you currently read...
Concrete. Wow, that's an incredibly short list!

Favorite and least favorite comic character...
I think Batman is as good as it gets. For least favorite, I believe that would be NFL Super Pro.

Superpower you would want...
That would be flying.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
I think I have one right here. Ranch-flavored Doritos™.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
Hot Wheels as a kid; any computer flight simulator as an adult.

Things you collect...
I collect 1/18th-scale model cars.

Favorite pastime or hobby...
I like to occasionally pretend I'm a musician. I play bass guitar.

Favorite television show...
I'll go with *Fraiser* right now.

Last good book you read...
The first two-thirds of Stephen King's *IT*.

Last good movie you saw...
Speed. No, change it. It's *Pulp Fiction*. Doesn't everybody say that?

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...
They'd choose Forest Whitaker.

Favorite cartoon...
Speed Racer.

Nicknames you've had...
I'm slowly but surely persuading all my friends to call me "Doc." My initials are M.D.B.

Person you'd most like to work with...
I'd like to work with Christopher Priest.

Favorite musical performer...
That would be Stanley Clarke, even though his last 10 albums have been terrible.

If you had the power of the Beyonder, what would you do...
Make everyone look exactly alike, so we could find out what else we could hate about each other.

Why do you read *Wizard*?
I'm waiting to see when I'll get on the "Top Ten Hottest Artists" list. ☆

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THE ULTIMATE

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WARLOCK™

The evil unfolds...(516) 624-9300

GENESIS™

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